

Ellen Ashe

CLARE ALLEN





Class PZ3

Book .A4235

Copyright N^o

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.





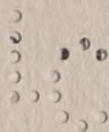
Photo by R. D. Beem.

ALONG THE LITTLE QUINLEY RIVER

ELLEN ASHE

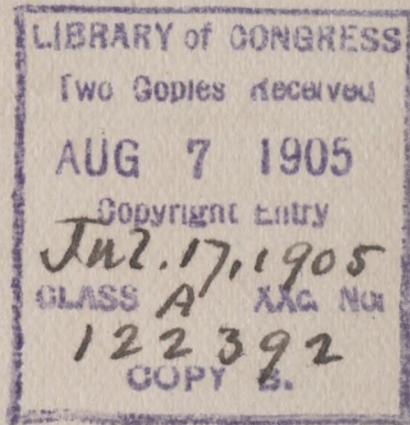
A Story

By
CLARE ALLEN



1905
Press of the U. B. Publishing House
Dayton, Ohio

PZ3 :
A4235



35

Copyright, 1905, by Clare Allen



a.s.g. Aug. 5.05-

CONTENTS

	PAGE.
CHAPTER I.	
THE LITTLE ASHE GIRL.....	5
CHAPTER II.	
A DAY AT SCHOOL.....	17
CHAPTER III.	
MISS ASHE—TEACHER.....	25
CHAPTER IV.	
PEOPLE—AND A PARROT.....	29
CHAPTER V.	
AN ARTISTIC VENTURE.....	35
CHAPTER VI.	
AT THE “CAPITOL”.....	39
CHAPTER VII.	
NAN JAMES.....	45
CHAPTER VIII.	
THE GARDEN OF LOVE.....	51

CHAPTER IX.

THE CITY OF HOPE.....	61
-----------------------	----

CHAPTER X.

AMONG THE STORES.....	65
-----------------------	----

CHAPTER XI.

AUNT ELLEN'S CHRISTMAS LETTER TO MILDRED	71
--	----

CHAPTER XII.

NEW FRIENDS	77
-------------------	----

CHAPTER XIII.

EDITOR CLARKE'S ASSISTANT.....	87
--------------------------------	----

CHAPTER XIV.

AN EVENING WALK.....	95
----------------------	----

CHAPTER XV.

A DECISION AND A QUESTION.....	101
--------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XVI.

IN GERMANY	105
------------------	-----

CHAPTER XVII.

BARON KAFF	113
------------------	-----

CHAPTER XVIII.

KERZDORF	119
----------------	-----

ELLEN ASHE

CHAPTER I.

THE LITTLE ASHE GIRL.

"If Ellen isn't content, send her home. I don't think we ought to keep her there all day, Aunt Alice," said Anna Foster, tying the little girl's bonnet-strings under a small chin.

"There! now be good," and the young girl kissed the child on both pale cheeks and shook her playfully.

"Don't, Anna," she objected, crossly. There was an unpleasant note of command in her voice.

"Come, dear, I 'm ready to go now," and the cloud cleared a little in the child's face as her aunt closed the bedroom door and pinned her hat securely before the glass. "Don't forget to lock the kitchen door," she said to Anna, as she led Ellen away.

"Hurrah for school!" shouted Anna softly after them, as they unlatched the gate.

Miss Ashe spoke brightly to a neighbor who

Ellen Ashe

was leaning over her fence, a dishpan under her arm, talking to a woman in the next yard, who was weeding the walk.

"Ellen 's going to-day, is she?" called the woman, after a crisp good-morning.

"Yes, we 'll try it and see if she 'll stay," Miss Ashe replied, quickening her steps as a bell sounded its first stroke on the cool, thin air of a September morning.

The woman weeding raised her head and looked curiously after the pair as they disappeared around the corner.

"It does beat anything! I never saw anything so unjust and unfair in all my life. It does seem that their ma's people ought to have taken those children. There 's Miss Ashe teaching and raising two children, after she has brought up Anna Foster to earn her own living, now. It does seem like there 's something real wrong in it," and Mrs. Rhoades stood up and straightened herself painfully.

Her listener broke in eagerly: "But the Does did want the little one; at least Sarah Doe—she married Tom Snorf—told all over Norton that she offered to take Ellen, but Miss Ashe wouldn't hear to the children being separated. For my part," she continued, scouring out her pan with the cloth, "I don't think she 'll have to care for that little Ellen

The Little Ashe Girl

long. She 's a queer child. But they say Miss Ashe seems to think more of her than either of the other girls. Many and many a night she 's sat up with her half the night, when she 'd have one of those sinking chills, and next morning Miss Ashe would be off to school, smiling as fresh as you or me after a good night's rest. And if you 'd meet her on the street, she 'd be the first person you 'd go to for help if you were lost in a strange place. She has that helping look on her face. She 's a saint on earth, if ever they come among us. Well, this isn't cutting out that wrapper. I must go in. Mandy hasn't come home yet, has she?" she inquired of her neighbor, who was packing salt between the bricks with her knife-blade.

"Oh, land no! She never comes when she goes to her Uncle Ike's until her pa writes for her. Miss Foster, who will be Eddie's teacher if he goes to your building?" She hailed the young teacher as she passed the house on her way to school.

"He 's in the fourth grade this year, isn't he? Then he 'll come to me," replied Miss Foster, smiling at the sullen-faced boy, who stopped cutting the fence at the mention of his name and came to lean against his mother as she talked to Anna.

Ellen Ashe

"Well, I 'm glad! It seemed like he didn't do no good with Miss Cook last year. I don't know why, but Eddie was always so nervous all last winter. Lots of days he complained, so, I wouldn't send him to school. I always thought she made them study too hard. Eddie said he never understood his lessons all the time he went to her. He 's not very strong; he 's like his pa's folks," and Mrs. Rhoades brushed the ashy hair away from her son's heavy countenance.

"Miss Cook has always been a very successful teacher. Perhaps Edward's missing so much was more at fault than the teaching," suggested Edward's new teacher, pleasantly.

"Mrs. Simpson, if Ellen comes home early, may she stay with you until school is out?" called Anna, and, receiving an affirmative answer, she hurried away to school after a word with Mrs. Rhoades.

Mrs. Simpson hung up her dishpan a little absently above the kitchen sink. She wrung out the cloth several times in a pan of clear water, and stretched it carefully on the rack above the stove. As she sat down with a pan of beans to look over for dinner, she frowned a little at her husband, who came into the kitchen with a vest in his hand.

"Here, just take a minute, will you, to sew

The Little Ashe Girl

this on?" He threw it into her lap, and a corner of the cloth dropped into the pan of water.

"Oh, there! why didn't you hand it to me right?" She shook the wet sleeve impatiently. "Now I 've got to stop and press it, and it 's late now for the beans to bake before twelve."

"It seems to me that you needn't have taken quite so long to empty the dishpan, either, eh, Maggie?" retorted her husband, with an exasperating chuckle. He was struggling with a refractory collar, and his mood was not sweetened thereby to a degree of tolerance suitable to his wife's vexatious humor.

"Don't fling things back at me this morning, Sam. If you do, you 'll be apt to get 'em returned," and two bright spots circled in her cheeks as she went to the window to get a better light on her sewing. "This is the most ticklish collar I 've had in seven years. Oh, there goes that button again!" and Samuel Simpson murmured something too low for his wife's ear.

As she looked inquiringly at him, his face reddened suspiciously, and he lifted a tea-kettle from the stove. As though possessed of some malignant spirit, the handle snapped out of its fastenings, and with a howl of anguish the unfortunate man dashed to one side to escape the flood of boiling water.

Ellen Ashe

"Save us, man, what did you do?" cried the terrified woman, afraid to examine the dripping hand her husband was plunging into a basin of cold water.

"Do? You ask that after letting a kettle boil and boil, until the handle 's melted? Oh, my skin! my skin! it 's cooked! I caught my thumb in the handle." Mr. Simpson clutched at his wife suddenly with his good hand. "Mag, quick! The soda! I 'm—" He finished his sentence in a mumbling tone, and fell, his white face in vivid contrast with the black rug which lay before the kitchen table.

"Oh, what shall I do? He never fainted before in his life," and Maggie Simpson, answering her own question, threw a shawl over her head and flew through the darkened parlor, down the walk, and into Mrs. Rhoades' front yard, where she found the owner still at work on the walk.

"Where 's Eddie?" she cried, shrilly, and the amazed mother of the boy dropped her knife on her salt cup as the unusual spectacle of neat Mrs. Simpson, with hair disheveled and eyes rolling, appeared before her.

"Why, he didn't go to school to-day. His tooth hurt him, and I couldn't see that one day made any difference, so I let him stay out. He 's in there now—why, Mrs. Simpson, what

The Little Ashe Girl

is the matter?" and Mrs. Rhoades, now thoroughly frightened, followed the flying form before her into the house.

"Eddie, go with all your might for Doctor Goodall. Sam never fainted before in all the twenty years I've known him. Run—oh, there he goes now, starting for the country, of course," and she was out of the house again, waving her apron over her head as she ran.

A buggy drew up before the gate, and a small, heavily-built man with gray hair and piercing dark eyes got out and faced the excited woman, holding the reins in his hand. He was used to excited people, was this doctor of many years' experience. So he listened to the broken explanation of the accident, while he searched under the seat for the medicine case. With a deliberateness that was torture to the woman who watched him, he carefully closed, at a page marked by a strip of leather, a volume of poetry he had been reading.

"Do you always read poetry, doctor, when you drive?" asked Mrs. Rhoades, who had recovered somewhat, not being really informed what was wrong, and glad to be diverted a little as they walked along to Mrs. Simpson's house.

The doctor walked at his usual slow pace, while Maggie Simpson walked far in advance,

as if she hoped to hurry him a little. Doctor Goodall cleared his throat. "Yes, I always do. My best reading is done in my buggy, out in the cool country," he replied, his fine eyes lighting up at her question.

"Poetry! You talk about poetry at a time like this? O Doctor, Sam may be dying!" burst forth Mrs. Simpson with repressed fury in her tones.

"But, my dear madam, we have not yet reached Sam. When we do, Sam is the all-important subject for my mind to engross itself with. You see," he went on, turning again to Mrs. Rhoades, "Poetry is—"

"Say, Doc, you can hear Mr. Simpson groaning over to Johnson's store. Hadn't you better hurry up?" came in derisive tones from the window, as Eddie Rhoades' head was thrust out of it.

A turn in the walk brought unmistakable sounds of moaning to the ears of the group, and Doctor Goodall finished his sentence, though no one heard it.

After a brief examination of the hand, the physician looked grave. "I 'm afraid, Mrs. Simpson, we can't save the thumb," he said in a low tone, avoiding her eyes. "It was a most unusual accident. Mr. Simpson's thumb was deeply cut before this burning occurred,

The Little Ashe Girl

and he says the handle caught, and in some way the tin cut into the flesh, while the hot water finished this ugly little affair."

"O Doctor!" and Maggie Simpson dropped helplessly into a chair. "You mean you will have to amputate it?" she inquired, steadily, after she had looked wildly up at him for a minute or so.

"Yes, and I am glad you are a strong, brave woman, as it can be done right here at the house. I sent for my instruments," he said, preparing bandages.

"Now?" and Mrs. Simpson almost shrieked the word.

"At once. You will need to help me," and the doctor administered the anæsthetic.

Some one brought in a glass of water and offered it to Maggie. She drank of it gratefully. "That little Ashe girl is in the kitchen. There 's another girl with her, and she says she is to stay with you until school is out," said the girl, who had waited to take the glass with her.

"Oh, everything happens! Of course she 'll have to stay, but what will we do with the child, just now? Everybody's too busy to watch her."

"Watch her nothing! Let her sit here. If she won't stay at school where she belongs, let

Ellen Ashe

her stay quiet out of the way. That 's what I think about it." Mrs. Rhoades held up her hand in warning as a twelve-year-old girl led Ellen into the room.

"She wouldn't stay, and Miss Ashe sent me with her," explained the elder girl.

"Yes, just run along and leave her." Mrs. Simpson gave an order to one of the helping women and dismissed the child from her mind. During the operation she stood bravely by the doctor, ready to hand or take away the necessary instruments. After it was all over she sank limply on the floor, and her husband's cheery voice was the first to reach her ears after she was again in full command of her faculties.

"Well, Maggie, this is pretty serious, but who told you to go off like that?" The words, though faintly spoken, were Sam's undaunted own, and the unexpected cheer in them revived the oppressive air as nothing else could have done.

Mrs. Simpson, in a spasm of relief, threw herself at him, but was speedily ejected by the doctor from the room. "All is quiet here for twenty-four hours, and no one enters the room except through leave," he said, significantly, to Mrs. Simpson. A few women hurriedly prepared to leave.

The Little Ashe Girl

As he turned to draw down a curtain, Doctor Goodall uttered an inarticulate word of surprise. Standing with her back against the wall, a look of indescribable horror in her eyes, was the little Ashe girl. "My eye, my child! What do you mean by being here?" demanded the doctor, taking her not ungently by the arm and walking her to the door.

"I got in before you cut it off, and I couldn't get out again," she said, riveting her eyes on the bed.

The doctor stopped short. "You weren't in during the operation?"

He was agitated, and the sight was so novel that Mr. Simpson's spirits rose. It was hard to keep him down. "Well, Doc, I guess you 're sort of disturbed, ain't you?" he said, but a twinge of pain distorted the smile and he subsided meekly.

The little girl stopped just before she reached the door, and, fixing her earnest gaze on the man on the bed, she said slowly, paying no attention to the doctor's vigorous shake of her arm, "Did it hurt much?"

"Oh, listen! Take that child away! Hurt? Oh, how it does ache!" and he began to toss restlessly.

Doctor Goodall sent a piercing glance after the child as he handed her over to the women

Ellen Ashe

in the kitchen. "Strange little thing," he said to himself, then devoted his mind to his patient.

A Day at School

CHAPTER II.

A DAY AT SCHOOL.

"O dearest, dearest boy! my heart
For better lore would seldom yearn,
Could I but teach the hundredth part
Of what from thee I learn."

— *Wordsworth.*

A STIFLING, blossom-scented air wafted in through the open windows of the schoolroom, and bore with it no relief from the intense heat of late May in central Ohio.

Fifty children sat or stood about the room, most of them sitting or standing in erect positions, and busy, but with a weary listlessness in their attitudes.

Miss Korton, the teacher, interrupted a grammar lesson she was conducting, in the midst of analysis of sentences. She announced that there would be a slight change of program for that afternoon.

Little buzzes of interest ran around the room, for the children had learned to prize Miss Korton's "changes of program" as pleasant diversions in the monotony of the school routine.

"It's very warm, boys and girls, but we can't entirely ignore our English lesson. So I've

Ellen Ashe

thought of original story-writing for to-day's work."

Another little stir of interest convinced Miss Korton that her thoughtfulness of their comfort, as well as their progress in school-work, had not been received unappreciatively by the children.

"If the boys like, they may write Indian stories, the kind that they would like to live, actually, if there was a policeman just around the corner to help them out of dangerous places," she said, and this little attack of the boys' courage was greeted with a burst of genuine, unforced laughter.

There was an excellent spirit of understanding existing in this school between pupils and teacher. Very much of a girl herself, high in spirit, and with a somewhat quick temper that had been softened through the years to an unbending will, if aroused in defense of principle, this particular teacher was possessed of a keen and thorough knowledge of child nature and its needs, and how to meet them. Her sympathetic handling of the "bad-boy" type seldom failed to win such pupils to at least conformity to school rules.

When the children were at work again, the superintendent entered with a package of papers in his hand. He usually visited the

A Day at School

different rooms as a worker among the children, in order to observe the unconscious work of the school. Seated in the rear of the room, occupying one of the school-seats, he wrote with them, and, after a glance in his direction, the children seemed to be unaware of his presence.

Miss Korton declared, at last, that the time to be given for the writing of the stories was up. "Now we will hear the reading," she announced, drawing her chair to one side and preparing her mind for an hour's relaxation. She entered into these little voyages into the unknown world of individualism with ardor. She was quick to detect a stroke of power, here and there, and never failed to encourage longer and more direct strokes as the outgrowth of these first ones.

Before the rustle of the papers had subsided a hand was raised, and Miss Korton lifted her chin. "What is it, Ellen?" she asked, a little surprised.

"May I speak to you, please?"

"Yes," but there was some disapproval in the tones. An awful stillness settled over the room as the child rose. The clock sounded its regular clug, clug, on and on, with the hush of the schoolroom to increase its volume. Still Ellen stood by her desk, one small hand

Ellen Ashe

planted firmly on the edge, but making no move to advance into the sea of fixed attention.

"Ellen," called Miss Korton, a little imperatively.

"It 's all right now; I don't need to ask you," and the child sank into her seat with flaming cheeks.

A suppressed smile went around the room, and Miss Korton's face flushed. The superintendent looked up from his papers, first at the child, then at Miss Korton. There was a trace of both surprise and amusement in his eyes.

The little stories were good, and some of them were interesting, both in subject and style; for the children had caught something of their young teacher's originality, and surprised Mr. Clemmons on this occasion by the quality of their work in this department of study. Miss Korton was gratified.

The new superintendent of the Quinley schools had been the subject of repeated discussion, after his arrival in the little city, by both teachers and people. He was aware of it, and was thoroughly amused when a little story reached his ears that had grown somewhat in its recital by many. At an evening dinner the new superintendent had been attacked in his

A Day at School

methods of conducting the schools, and one of his teachers, a very young and enthusiastic student of Shakespeare, opposed the criticism with violence. "I don't wish to teach with a superintendent who lets me do as I please," she had declared. "You don't care to send your children to a teacher who is lax in discipline, and a good superintendent teaches his teachers. And as for his manner, Shakespeare"—a smile was provoked as the ardent student quoted frequently—"wrote these lines for people who are not afraid of scorn, if they live on higher planes of thought than their neighbors:

"The eagle suffers little birds to sing,
And is not careful what they mean thereby;
Knowing that with the shadow of his wings
He can at pleasure stint their melody."

"I don't care if they are insulted," she had said afterwards. "I can't stand it to hear people criticise the schools, when they know nothing of the management of their own children."

"Miss Korton, you haven't called on Ellen yet," whispered a small boy, close to his teacher. She had purposely avoided calling on the child to recite, knowing that her embarrassment was as painful to sensitive people as to the child herself; but she could not well do anything else now, as the boy's whisper had been heard and heads were turning in the

Ellen Ashe

direction of Ellen's seat. "Read us your story, Ellen," said Miss Korton, in an easy, natural manner, but she lowered a blind in order to give the little girl an opportunity to compose herself. Every eye was turned in her direction. It was always so, when Ellen was called upon to recite. Her timidity had become a school curiosity.

Miss Korton was growing annoyed at the long delay, when Ellen began to read, very suddenly. Almost choking with fear, and with a face of spotted red and white, she read in a trembling voice, "A Visit to Niagara Falls."

The children listened at first curiously, then impatiently, and at last began to send glances at one another across the room.

Miss Korton did not interrupt her, but waited until the last word, spoken almost in a whisper, had been read. Then she said quietly, with a soft touch on the head of the little girl who was gazing miserably at the blotted sheets, "That is the best story we have heard yet," and a nod of approval from the superintendent confirmed her words.

The children looked with a new respect at the young writer of the story as they put away their books, preparatory to dismissal. Ellen lingered as the others filed out in rank, a

A Day at School

search for a book furnishing an excuse for remaining in the room until the other pupils had scattered to go in their several directions toward home. Superintendent Clemmons was inspecting some papers that were pinned for display on a strip of dark green denim tacked against the wall, when Miss Korton returned from seeing the children to the front door.

"Ellen, what was it you wished to ask me?" she asked, looking over the sheets the children had handed in to her for correction of errors.

"O Miss Korton, I didn't want to be called on," she said, dropping her books on the floor in her confusion at being addressed suddenly.

"But your story was good. As I told you, it was the best. You wouldn't wish to refuse the others the pleasure of hearing it, would you?" asked Miss Korton, smiling at her so kindly that Ellen's face cleared a little.

"I don't know," she said, then went on putting her desk to rights.

After she had gone the superintendent came up to the desk. "The children did well to-day. Is the little girl who read last one of your problems?" he asked, following her with his eyes as she walked away from the building.

"Yes, she is, one of my greatest; but I believe she is not an unworthy subject for my

Ellen Ashe

thoughts to dwell upon—here among the other children,” and Miss Korton tapped the papers with her pencil. “Wasn’t her story good?” she asked. “I am sure that she displays talent; and who can say what the years will do to develop it?” she ended, a little gravely.

The superintendent laughed heartily. “I don’t know,” and he shook his head reflectively. “I fear you are throwing your own optimism into this child’s character. It was well written, and showed some talent, even, I’ll admit,” he hastened to add, for he was just in his most trivial conversation. “But I think the child is morbid, and entirely too conscious of herself and her work. There isn’t enough of the spontaneous life about her that children at her age should exhibit. Well,” he broke off suddenly, looking at his watch, “I shall have just five minutes to walk to a meeting at the Central Building and reach it in time.”

Miss Korton followed him to the door. “Superintendent Clemmons, do you know that I apply Emerson’s words to Ellen Ashe? ‘Bashfulness and apathy are a tough husk in which a delicate organization is protected from premature ripening,’” she quoted, with a little mischief in saying the last word.

Mr. Clemmons laughed and hurried away to his principals’ meeting.

CHAPTER III.

MISS ASHE—TEACHER.

MISS ASHE, the new teacher of the third grade in the Farwell School, faced her forty-five pupils smilingly on this first morning of her school experience. She had determined, as she pored over school journals and magazines during the short time of preparation for her work, that she would succeed on her first day. "Of course it must be the hardest one of all," she had said to her cousin Anna, who still held a position of honor in the Quinley schools.

She found the school unruly, and it was not surprising, as the room had been in the care of three different teachers since the illness of Miss Atley had deprived the children of her instruction.

After a morning exercise she talked to the children, explaining in a few well-chosen words that she was now their regular teacher, and they would be responsible to her for the use they made of the few remaining weeks of school. The children listened respectfully enough till a boy, with an evil leer at the new teacher, whose eyes were directed away from his corner, threw a ruler across the room.

Ellen Ashe

The timid giggles of the girls, with hands clapped over their mouths, the audible mirth of the bolder boys, and the loud laughter of one tall, thin boy in the corner, who at a glance might easily have been mistaken for the superintendent, turned the quiet school into a scene of terror for the young teacher.

“Now I ’m lost—or saved. This is my chance to either win or force their obedience for all time.” The thought shaped itself in her mind as she stood before them and—looked. Some one giggled and put his head down on his desk. Gradually, one by one, the children became quiet and stared back at her. They had expected a scene, a vigorous rebellion, or perhaps an ineffectual punishment to be administered by the new teacher. They were disappointed, and a little interested as to what she would do.

When she spoke, she looked over the heads of the children into the yard. “Since I am a stranger here, and know nothing of the town, could I ask one of you to take a very important message for me?” she asked in perfectly expressionless tones.

Thirty hands waved in the air, and while they floated about the new teacher was doing some rapid reading of the faces before her. She saw that her little plan had been successful thus far.

Miss Ashe—Teacher

The pupils were not deceived. Children are not ever easily deceived. They knew that she was going to do something with Frank, but what it was they couldn't tell as yet. They would have to wait and see, and that was exactly what she intended they should do.

She called a small, pleasant-faced boy to her desk, and, speaking in a tone too low for the ears strained to hear the message, she sent him from the room.

Frank was growing a little uneasy. He wasn't afraid of her, not he. But he wished she 'd say something, so that he could answer back. He was mad and he didn't like to wait to show that he wasn't afraid of her.

Miss Ashe heard the lessons through, and the day was won, for the children behaved well and listened with good attention to her explanations. Some time after recess the boy she had sent away from the building returned, carrying a school register in his hand.

"Thank you," she said, in a quite audible tone; and a stare of relief from Frank did not escape the new teacher's eye. By this time the children were becoming a little interested in their work, and only a few were noisy as heads were turned in Frank's direction when Miss Ashe walked to his seat, and said in a voice not to be misunderstood, "I shall punish you after the others are dismissed."

Ellen Ashe

He offered no resistance. She had conquered and the children knew it. They acceded to her demand of unquestioning obedience from that hour of victory, and the school closed successfully. When she went back to Quinley at the close of the school term, after the hardest five weeks' work she had ever known, she was a tired but happy young teacher.

She had won the cordial approval of the little town in her work. The people were hospitable, though many of the fathers of the school children were railroad men, who traveled about from town to town, and this always seriously affects the discipline of a school. Ellen's election to teach the following year was so heartily received by the people that she could well forget the "Alps that had arisen and sunk."

After all, the teacher, the true teacher, directs the growth of minds, perhaps, more than she teaches the children committed to her care. Minds will grow, and it is the high privilege of the teacher to direct this growth upward, even if a slight narrowing of the mental scope is required in this culture of the soul, as well as of the brain.

CHAPTER IV.

PEOPLE—AND A PARROT.

MRS. HERBERT ALLISON was a woman who magnetized the hidden good in others to the surface. She discouraged by refusing the sanction of her voice ill-natured gossip of any kind, and Ellen had acquired in her daily intercourse with this resolute woman something of her hostess's independence of action. Mrs. Allison cared nothing for the weak criticism of the idle-minded, and managed her house and her children according to her own ideas of right and useful living. Ellen stood a minute at the gate, talking with her, on this last afternoon she was to spend with the family as a member of it.

The great pine trees on either side of the walk merged their deep moaning into a murmuring farewell to her, for she loved them and their low, sad music. "I say Longfellow's beautiful words to my trees, 'The stars come out to listen to the music of the sea,'" said Ellen, looking up at them as she quoted the lines softly; and with another little word to

Ellen Ashe

Mrs. Allison she left the home where so many happy days had been passed.

Ellen thoroughly appreciated the sterling worth of the character of her cousin's husband. In early life he had been an assistant in a harness shop. He was at the time of Ellen's adoption into his family one of Quinley's wealthiest citizens. He was a German, and an early failure in business taught him carefulness of money; thus the natural tendency was strengthened by a sense of his early mistakes. Mr. Kiel was a man of little school education, but his was the education of experience and travel; for he had traveled in every section of his adopted land. He was fond of music, but business was his real life; and his chief pleasure, after all, was in his increasing fortune.

At the time of his marriage to Anna Foster he was a widower, and twenty years her senior, so that his little girl, Mildred, coming into his life in his declining years, was a veritable favor of Heaven, as she filled it with the sunshine his nature needed. The Kiels left in August for their annual outing at the seashore, and Ellen was left alone with the maid, in general charge of the house and in particular charge of the Mexican parrot. The bird hated her, and she returned the compliment of

People—and a Parrot

Polly's dislike with equal warmth. Once Ellen had accidentally overturned her cage, and from that day of tragedy the wire house bristled with feathered rage when Ellen approached it. However, she succeeded by strategic movements in keeping fairly at peace with her foreign foe, and enjoyed the excitement a morning's conversation afforded.

One afternoon Ellen closed the house carefully and walked leisurely away for a call on Miss Aisles, an artist. There was a wonderful idea resolving itself into a definite purpose under the new tan hat, prettily trimmed with bunches of grapes. The hat matched the tan stripes in her gingham dress, and the colors in the grapes blended with the pinks and corals in the pearl buttons that relieved the plainness of the waist. As she descended the steps, Polly deceitfully lowered her head. "You hypocrite! If I should ruffle that brilliant satin emptiness, I never could play Cupid's Garden again," said Ellen, half wondering that so little of a brain could cherish so much hatred; but she was not then a philosopher. Had she been, she might have reached the conclusion that only little brains have room for revengeful thoughts.

She found Miss Aisles in her studio. The artist laid down her crayon as Ellen entered,

Ellen Ashe

and pushed away the canvas on which she was sketching a head of her mother.

"Will you help me?" asked Ellen, with a glance of ever-new admiration around the room. Pictures in oil and water colors, casts, and a few excellent prints adorned the walls and tables, while an exquisite bronze piece occupied a corner. A real Indian rug covered half the floor space, and a copper Paul Revere lantern, Miss Aisles' latest novelty, swung above a small door.

Ellen unfolded her little plan to Miss Aisles. "I 'm going to use my own money and furnish my room new," she announced. "I would like your help in selecting; that is, if you are not too busy," and Ellen looked doubtfully at the canvas.

"Not a bit. I 'll go; but I 'll have to run and dress for the street. I haven't taken the time before," and in an incredibly short ten minutes she was ready to leave with Ellen.

After the girls had selected a plain tan matting for the room, they strolled away for one of their favorite walks to the old bridge across the little Quinley River. Quinley was a city that attracted the favorable notice of every traveler through its territory. It was high, and lay in the region that just, and no more, claimed Ohio's right to the description, "roll-

People—and a Parrot

ing.” But the beautiful drives that encircled the historic little city, and enticed many a wayfarer to explore their cool lengths, and the many handsome but few palatial homes, were the objects of the stranger’s admiration. Miss Aisles sketched the little river, with its overhanging shrubbery and just a glimpse of the schoolhouse tower between the trees along its bank, until the red and purple sunset lights played over the water and warned her of the approach of night.

An Artistic Venture

CHAPTER V.

AN ARTISTIC VENTURE.

WHEN the Kiels returned to Quinley, late in September, Ellen was awaiting them at the station. She took Mildred from her father's arms and carried her, with her sleepy little head bobbing over her shoulder, to the house, two blocks away. Laying the little girl on her own bed, she invited her parents into her room. The transformation was complete. The dingy carpet was replaced by the cool, light matting. The heavy, high walnut bed had been removed and a white and gold iron frame rested in its place, while a handsome dressing-table with a carved seat stood between the two daintily-curtained east windows.

But the walls were Ellen's especial pride, for on these most of her money had been expended. Hanging in a long, narrow space was an autumn picture, painted by Miss Aisles expressly to fill it. Its gorgeous coloring was heightened by a dull green screen, opened against the lighter wall beneath. A bowl of nasturtiums, framed in gold, hung above the dressing-table, upon which Ellen had placed a

Ellen Ashe

real bowl of the splendid flowers. An ocean scene, in white, and a picture of her little cousin Mercedes, in fancy white costume, silhouetted in a plain black frame, were hung in good lights; but Ellen's favorite picture was her "Wild Roses." This piece, as the others, was Helen Aisles' work, and it was a picture that was good in power as well as pleasing to the eye. One of the great American painters, whose pupil Miss Aisles had been while a student in the East, had favored the picture with his notice.

Mr. Kiel's face expressed varying emotions as he viewed the result of Ellen's work. There was momentary disapproval in it, but after some mild advice on the use and abuse of money, he praised and admired to her entire satisfaction in her artistic venture. She candidly admitted that she was lavish in the expenditure of her money; but her motto was her own, "Be prodigal of the present and save the future." As her health was breaking a little, she began to make plans for a visit to the East early in the next summer. She believed that a month or so at the seashore would save, not only the dollars of the future, but years of impaired strength as well. So she traveled during her vacation through the eastern States with Miss Lawrence, one of the teachers, and

An Artistic Venture

returned to Quinley early in the autumn, fresh and vigorous, and full of new ideas for her coming year's work.

At the Capitol

CHAPTER VI.

AT THE "CAPITOL."

"OH, please, Miss Ashe, do let us march in the hall this afternoon!" and a crowd of merry boys and girls encircled their teacher as she sat at her desk.

Miss Ashe put her hands over her ears. "How can I let you do anything unless you are more quiet?" she objected, waving them away from her. She rose as the bell sounded and the children found their seats.

Quinley was justly proud of her schools. The Board of Education was composed of men of great ability, and a few of the members were men of State and National power, so that the schools were built up, gradually, from schools as good as those of any other city of equal size to the distinction of being classed with the best in the country.

The names of many distinguished men and women were on the "visitors' books" of the teachers, and the governor of the State had honored the little city by an especial visit to her schools. The beautiful Lowell Building was the pride of the community. It resembled

Ellen Ashe

the capitol building, and the grounds had been christened by the children College Hill. Visitors were entertained at this building if another was missed; for the costly and handsome structure was ideal in its completeness. It met the requirements of bodily as well as mental health within its æsthetic walls.

Ellen's was the highest school in the "capitol," but she was not the principal. The teacher in charge of the seven grades was Miss Harburg, and one of her friends.

The teachers were receiving on this day a drawing supervisor in the schools of a great city west of Quinley. She was a friend of Miss Aisles', but the private little purpose of her visit was a quest of new ideas; for Miss Aisles enjoyed a national reputation. Miss Silverton visited Miss Ashe during the last half hour before school closed for the day. Ellen gave her instructions to the children, and they fell quietly to work on a charcoal study of a growing lily. The two teachers sat at the desk, and Miss Silverton looked about her, her critical eye noting the decoration of the room in all its details.

Ellen's own pictures hung in the room, and the children, pleased at this interest in their day-home, repaid her by becoming careful little desk-keepers. They learned that a

At the Capitol

well-ordered room is conducive to well-ordered thoughts, and deeds are thoughts first. Miss Ashe laughed when some one remonstrated with her for washing off the slate-board so frequently. "If I bring carelessly or indifferently written work before the children, without fail theirs will be a perfect imitation in that respect. I experimented once to see how far this imitation of a teacher is carried on in the children's daily lives. I wrote problems on the board and crossed my 't's' in a decided slant, so," and she illustrated with a piece of crayon. "Saying nothing, of course, to them, I requested the children to copy the problems first, and show the solution neatly below; and when I examined the papers, one-third of them showed 't's' crossed in a slant," and Ellen had added, thoughtfully, "It is a serious thing to be a teacher."

Miss Ashe announced that Miss Silvertown would criticise the best drawings. "Will you bring yours, Isabel?" she asked, holding out her hand for the sketch. A very active, pretty girl came up to her, with a modest but, vivacious glance at the visitor.

Miss Silvertown uttered an exclamation of surprise. "That is excellent in tone," she said, looking at the drawing critically.

The young artist colored, but her dancing

Ellen Ashe

eyes were also a little direct in their gaze. As she walked away she shook her paper in the face of a studious little pupil as she passed his seat.

"Isabel!" There was amused dismay in Miss Ashe's tones. "You will ruin your lily. The fixative has not been used on it," and her eyes followed this embodiment of fun and genius with the pride of the teacher in a brilliant pupil.

"Who is she?" asked Miss Silvertown, and Ellen told her, adding, "Her work is unusual, don't you think?"

Miss Silvertown agreed graciously. Then she laughed. "I believe you teachers would have me believe that your city is a city of fame," she said, banteringly.

There was just a tinge of acid in the remark, and Ellen remembered that Miss Silvertown's position in the schools of the great western city had first been offered to Miss Aisles, who had declined to accept it.

When the visitor had departed with the fifth grade teacher, who, as Ellen described her, was one of the wittiest girls south of the St. Lawrence River, and the fourth grade teacher, whose perfect gymnastic exercises were models in the school, Miss Harburg brought in her spelling papers to Ellen's room.

At the Capitol

"Another day closed, and Indiana Jackson can't spell her name yet. Did you see our new gymnastics to-day? The children's movements were as graceful as mine," and she illustrated with a perfect imitation of the awkward motions of her six-year-old babies.

"Boone Jones and his papa are going to leave for the West, next week. At least that is the way Boone told it. I haven't the slightest doubt that his papa will reverse the order of precedence one of these days. Do you know, I have a presentiment that my Boone will do something wonderful some day—become the wild man of Great Skull Cañon, and travel with a museum, or something of that sort. He got up to-day during the reading hour, and told the children about the trees he was going to chop down, and the wild cats he was going to scare away from his door when they came prowling around at night. A mighty warrior is Daniel Boone Jones!"

The principal of the Lowell Building was one of the teachers who are called "best" in the various schools of a city, but she was irrepressible.

Miss Harburg walked with Ellen to her own door, and they discussed the day's events until Miss Rennes accosted them.

Ellen's roommate this winter was the daugh-

Ellen Ashe

ter of a French noble family, and, although she had no relatives in America, the light-heartedness of the French was thoroughly hers. Their hostess was a young widow whose grief and sorrow did not abate with time. After supper that evening, Antoinette read aloud a humorous selection from her favorite magazine, while Mrs. Ford sewed and Ellen worked on a plan of her schoolroom that she was preparing for the superintendent. Antoinette concluded her story and selected another that told of the lonely life of a widow. It was suggestive of Mrs. Ford's loss, and she regretted that she had begun it when their hostess left the room abruptly.

Ellen buried her nose thoughtfully in a great bunch of roses and carnations which her children had sent to her during her illness, a few days before. "Poor woman!" she said, drawing a long breath of fragrance from the lovely messengers of good will.

Antoinette was so filled with remorse and annoyance at her thoughtless reading that she went to her own room "to do penance," she said, and Ellen worked on alone until her plan was ready for the superintendent's next visit.

CHAPTER VII.

NAN JAMES.

"To meet Mrs. Leopold Parker Jewett, Mrs. Arlington James requests the pleasure of your company, on Saturday afternoon, October 5, from four until seven o'clock, two hundred Lincoln Avenue," read Ellen, coming in from school one evening, rose-cheeked and bright-eyed from her breezy walk. "Ah, yes, I'm delighted to meet Mrs. Leopold Parker Jewett, whoever she may be." She replaced the card in the envelope.

When Ellen entered the great drawing-room on the afternoon of Mrs. James' reception, the rooms were well filled. Her hostess presented Ellen to her husband's niece after she had received her with a pleasant little smile.

Mrs. James wore a gown of cream velvet, trimmed in rich lace. An Oriental ruby necklace burned against her white throat, and was clasped with a diamond of rare purity. The carmine silk folds that glistened and glowed richly against the white, accentuated the simplicity shown in the costume of the girl who stood by Mrs. Jewett's side. She was Miss

Ellen Ashe

Nan James, and a daughter as totally unlike her mother as a daughter could well be. Miss James at an early age had engaged herself in marriage to a young man of exceptional ability, but worldly poor, and with a few early mistakes to account for in his sum of successful later years. His early life was wrong only in the irresolution of a boy who has no aim, but who waits for the future to realize his ideals of a noble manhood. When he met Nan James, all of the latent force in his fine character concentrated in his new life-purpose, and he became a strong and live impersonation of the words of the Koran, "I was as a gem concealed." Mrs. James, however, resorted to every means in her power to force the withdrawal of her daughter's promise to marry this "person, who, my dear, has literally no prospect in the world of ever becoming a success in life."

Alfred Gordon disappeared from Quinley quite mysteriously. Nothing was heard of him for several years, then he was known to be a brilliant lawyer in a flourishing Southern capital.

She was a beautiful girl, this stately, low-voiced daughter of the leader of the city's social life. Despite her mother's commands and entreaties, she persisted in wearing gowns

Nan James

of noticeable simplicity, even plainness. Her taste was exquisite, but she selected only white and the softest tints for her hats and gowns. Her mother had on this occasion permitted her daughter's selection of her (Mrs. James') dinner costume; and so it was that she was an object of favorable comment.

Nan's beauty was the restful type. Her soft white mull fell gracefully about her feet, but there was no train. A cluster of yellow roses in her gold belt vied with the rich lights in her shining hair; and her deep blue eyes held a tender welcome for even the most casual of her mother's guests.

In the dining-room Ellen and Mrs. Kiel chatted while they were served with dainty ices. Mrs. Kiel described in a lively manner Mildred's latest accomplishment, and Ellen listened with interest while she ate her salad. Releasing themselves from a detaining conversation with a little group of friends, the cousins slipped away into the tiny but perfectly appointed conservatory for a quiet talk. Ellen breathed a sigh of relief. The musical dropping of the little fountain was soothing to the ear after the buzz of conversation in the dining-room; and the waves of one of the old waltzes, so dear to the lover of sentiment in music, rippled into the little room and

Ellen Ashe

melted in the cool splash of the fountain. Ellen listened, with a dreamy sadness in the eyes that, although not old, had learned to look beneath the surface flutter and sparkle of the butterfly-life and see the ugly, brown worm of common woe and submission to the inevitable.

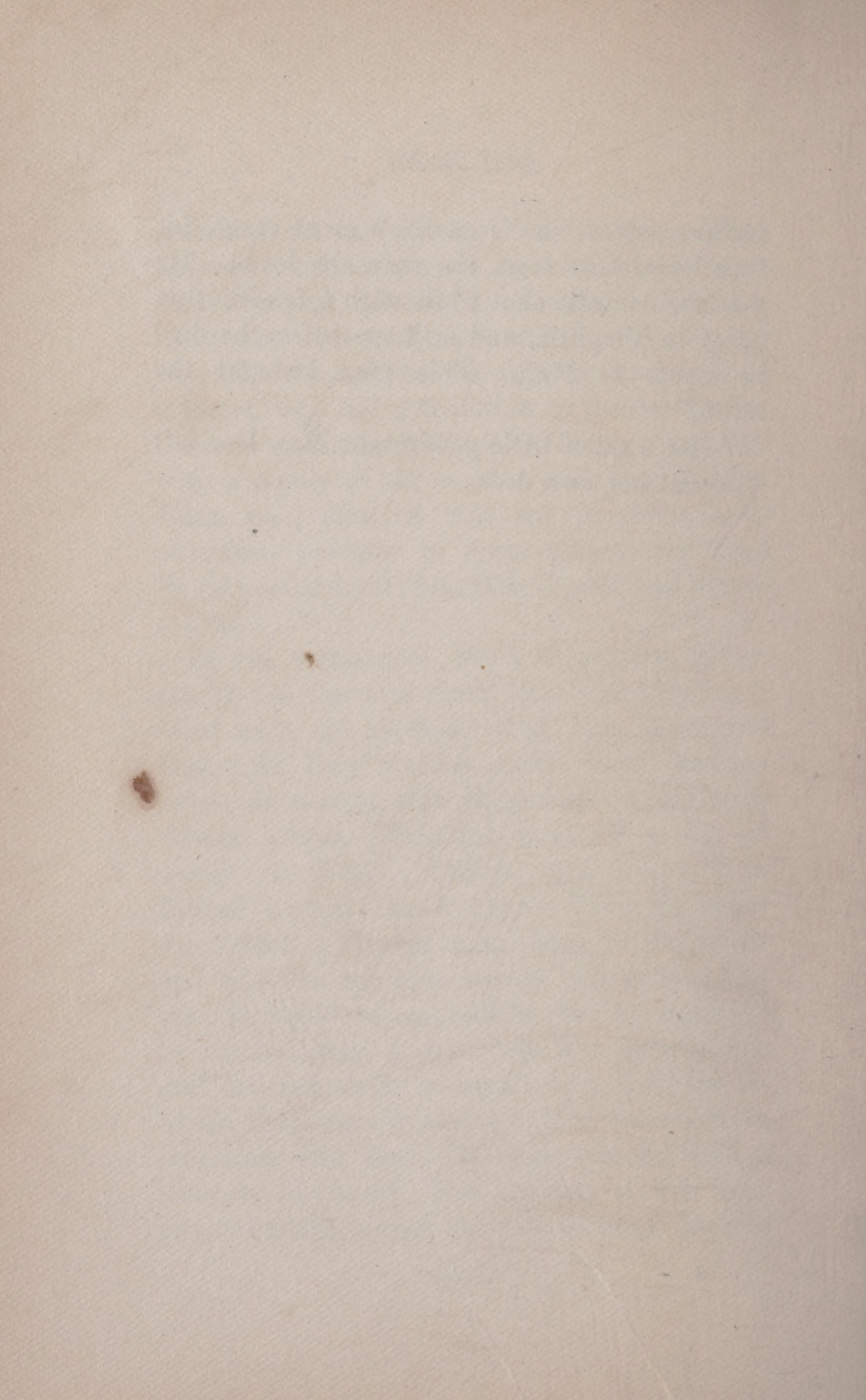
Some one entered the little flower-room, but with a glance at the cousins withdrew hastily. Ellen rose, startled into one of those half-conscious answers to mute appeals we read in eyes sometimes; but Miss James had disappeared.

In the wrap-room Ellen found an opportunity for the first time, that evening, for a word with her uncle's young wife, Margaret Doe. As they walked away from the gay house, streaming with light and vibrant with silvery voices, Margaret repeated a bit of gossip to Ellen. "Ellen, you know Nan James' history, don't you? To-night about six o'clock a strange man came to the house and asked to see Miss James. They told him that it would be impossible, but he wouldn't be turned away, and at last Nan heard of it and ordered them to admit him into the library. She went in alone, despite her mother's objection, and when she came out she held a letter in her hand. Her strength of will is so great that she played her part through like the

Nan James

perfect actress she is on life's great stage, for that letter was from the man she loved. He was accidentally shot while with a fox-hunting party in Virginia, and an hour before he died he wrote to Nan. This man brought the letter."

After a quiet little good-night Mrs. Doe left Ellen at her own door.



The Garden of Love

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GARDEN OF LOVE.

“When Faith and Love, which from thee parted
never,
Had ripened thy first soul to dwell with God,
Meekly thou didst resign this load of death,
called Life,
Which us from life doth sever.”

—*Milton.*

A LITTLE note was delivered to Miss Ashe, one morning, as she was leaving for school. Ellen read it in some surprise.

“My dear Miss Ashe,” it ran, “will you come to see me this afternoon?”

“Sincerely yours,

“NAN JAMES.”

The little missive was replete with Nan’s own directness and simplicity of action.

Some very eventful days in Ellen’s life counted the time between the last visit and this day, a month later, when she was admitted by Mrs. James into the reception hall and conducted to Nan’s room. It opened on to a balcony at the end of the wide upper hall, and its windows reflected the sunsets.

The girl rose to meet Ellen, and there was a little desultory talk before Mrs. James was

Ellen Ashe

called down-stairs. A silence fell between the girls when they were alone, and Nan sat looking at Ellen as she studied a picture of Nan's mother that embellished a fifth of the wall, and spoke loudly the presence of Mrs. James in a gorgeous, jewel-incrusted evening robe of purple velvet.

Nan's eye followed Ellen's gaze, and her delicate face flushed. "Mamma's birthday present to me, a year ago," she explained, with a look of repulsion in the eyes of adamant purity. "Miss Ashe, you write, don't you?" she asked suddenly.

Ellen was surprised, but she answered spiritedly: "Yes, indeed. I think I see more and more of Byron's artistic despair in my poems; just a tinge, too, of his grand gloominess; in fact, I think—"

"Don't, Miss Ashe," interrupted Nan, laughing, but with a hurt look in her lovely eyes. "This talent may become a world-power in you, for good or ill; for a writer teaches—always. Whether he would amuse, or write with a deep purpose in his heart, he teaches something. He may teach idleness, for a book of doubtful fiction does no more than that, or he may establish that most-to-be-deplored habit of satirizing the human race. O Ellen"—the word came so naturally that neither was aware

The Garden of Love

of the unaccustomed address—"if you do write don't become a satirist. Don't drag to light the faults and mistakes that may have been the cause of many an hour of agony and remorse, and hold them up with the idea of helping another brother or sister in the human family, or some such mistaken idea of world-benefaction. Expand and develop—don't quarrel with nature. But callousness to wrong—that is another view of the question. Let me tell you about a girl friend of mine in New York," she continued, piling the soft cushions about her head.

"You know I spent a winter in New York after Mr. Gordon left Quinley." She said this quite naturally, but a quick color came into her face and was gone before she spoke again. "I was a guest at the home of the girl of whom I speak, and she is one of the wealthiest girls in the city, as well as a member of one of New York's oldest families. Her sister is a famous and honored actress. I attended a semi-private reception for the President with her, and I was amazed at what she did on this occasion. In the receiving line, introducing to the President's wife, was one of the most distinguished statesmen in America. He is a leader in politics and in the social clubs, and a Shakespearean scholar of note, but a man of morals

Ellen Ashe

hard to reproduce in a like degree of laxity. As we passed along the line, touching the hands of the different men and women, we came to this Senator. Viola English swept past the hand he extended—he knew her father in politics—and cordially pressed the hand of the President's wife. As we drove away in the carriage, Viola said, 'Let me quote his Shakespeare to him:

“When we for recompense have praised the vile
It stains the glory in that happy verse which
aptly sings the good.”

“‘He admires so much this great master character painter who has no heroes; he only presents the strong, brave, fearless woman who dies, if need be, for her conviction.’”

Nan had spoken quite rapidly. She waited a moment, after she had concluded her little recital of her friend's defiance of social law, to recover her breath. Brushing her soft hair away from the brow that bore the seal of immortality, she looked at Ellen and began to speak again, but a sharp, quick breath caught her words, and she placed her hand at her side.

“Since my illness I have had these attacks frequently. No, don't; there is nothing mother can do.” She half rose, and leaned toward

The Garden of Love

Ellen. "I am going to tell you what I have never told to any one before; first, because of the sympathy and understanding in your eyes on the night of mother's dinner, and, secondly, because I believe that some day you will become a writer of influence; and I cannot leave this earth until I have given to the world a little of the joy and peace and hope that has been given to me."

"Miss James, you are not strong enough to tell me this now. Perhaps on another day," began Ellen, hot tears springing up into her eyes as she looked at the fair, spiritual face before her.

Nan shook her head positively. "No, now. Then I can wait in perfect peace for the end. It is not far off," she said. With a quick change of tone she began to speak again. "You know the event that saddened my life so many years ago." Neither smiled, though it had been but five. "Since that time, Ellen, I have tried hard to fill the hours with useful, earnest work and to see in the lives of those around me a heavier grief than mine. But, oh, my Father, how hard it was to live!" and with a sob so intense in suffering that Ellen rose and went to her, Nan threw herself on the bed, like a frail flower that has bent at last under a fierce and beating day of storm.

Ellen Ashe

She repulsed Ellen gently. "Let me finish, Miss Ashe," she said, clinging to the chair as she made her way back to it. "I threw myself into work while I was in New York. I visited the slums and the hospitals and the sky-attics, taking a few flowers or a little fruit each time, and enjoying it far more than they who are *called* human beings. Once—I'll never forget him—a feeble old man stood on the corner, holding out his hat. We know there are many impostors in a big city, but I watched this man before he was aware of my approach, and I heard him say, 'What shall I do? Oh, what shall I do?' It was one of the coldest days of the winter, and New York's climate is not mild. So I dropped a two-dollar note into his hat, and as I hurried away he called after me, 'May God bless you for saving me from taking my life.' I tell you this, Ellen, to prove how little we, who are safely shut away from life's desperate side, know of the tragedy in every day's sunshine in a great city."

Nan had brightened a little. Her voice was stronger, and her cheeks a little pink now. She took a picture from a drawer in her secretary. Carefully tied around it was a string of faded violets. "Alfred sent these to me once, when I begged him to give up smoking. He sent the flowers, saying merely on a card, 'I

The Garden of Love

will let the violets answer for me.' That was just before our engagement."

Nan handed the picture, which she had tinted in water colors, to her caller. "Do you think he looks like the personage mamma called him?" she asked, a bitter little smile curving her lips.

Ellen remembered the young man, and the picture recalled him as she had last seen him, walking with Nan one Sunday afternoon. Tall, considerably taller than the average man, he possessed a form that closely approached perfection. There was nobility in the carriage of the head, and the dark eyes looked at the beholder with a dreamy, poetic beauty in their depths. The mouth was expressive of musical sensibility, and the general look of elevation of thought was not marred by a high forehead, that seemed strangely adorned with closely-clinging rings of silky black hair.

Ellen looked long at the picture and at last returned it reverently.

Nan did not replace it in the drawer, but closed her slender fingers over it as she talked. "And now I will come to the real object of my sending for you to come here this afternoon. I am talking now, not to Miss Ashe, my friend of the day, but to a woman of broad and deep intelligence, who may in the course of years

Ellen Ashe

influence the thoughts of other women, also of broad and deep intelligence.

“My mother is a perfect type of the social life of to-day. She has a mind—of a kind. But the woman of this pleasure life never is a power; it takes strength to become a power. As for my mother’s interference in the lives of two people who were meant for one another, I have no wish to see her suffer. Her punishment is not in my hands.”

A noble pity swept across the beautiful face as Nan walked across the room and stood before her mother’s picture. The cold, brilliant eyes stared with insolent confidence down into the crystal-pure soul burning in those that gazed at her. “She believes that she is happy,” she said softly, turning away with a graceful little gesture of wonder and helplessness. She seemed to have forgotten the main purpose of the talk, and Ellen waited for her to remember.

Nan’s face and manner changed in expression when she came at last to Ellen, and, sitting down before her, looked into her face with a quiet, searching reading of it. Her voice was entirely free of emotion when she began to speak.

“A week before the news of Alfred’s death reached me by letter, I was sitting—one even-

The Garden of Love

ing it was—alone, with the bright light burning above my head, and mother in the adjoining room, answering a lot of invitations that the afternoon's mail had brought her. A minute before I had been thinking that, perhaps, sometime, somewhere, my prayer that Alfred would come back to me would be answered; and suddenly the atmosphere of the room cleared in a way I cannot describe, and Alfred called to me, as distinctly as I speak to you, only that the tone was not audible, as mine. I waited, sitting like a statue, listening to mother's pen scraping over the paper in the next room, and trying hard to make myself believe that I had been dreaming. But, Ellen, the voice that called my name was his, and the wonderful beauty and peace that has since filled my life I cannot express to you in words. There is always with me now a feeling that death is a beautiful change in form, and that those we mourn and grieve are smiling all around us at the childishness of our grief. Oh, when I see a mother, so heart-broken over the loss of her darling, perhaps her only boy, I want to put my arms around her and lift her up into this wonderful life in which I can see no sorrow, no suffering, no disappointment, only the delight of soul-communion, and the sweet music of love, everywhere."

Ellen Ashe

Nan's voice sank to a whisper, and as the last words died on her lips a pallor unlike the others that had appeared over her face during the afternoon shadowed her cheek, and Ellen saw that she was struggling for breath. She called Mrs. James, and the house was aroused. They laid her on the bed and a physician was summoned.

Nan's golden head was slightly turned on the pillow, and the white hand lay, frail and still, covering the picture which Ellen slipped into it as they tenderly lifted her.

A long ten minutes passed, of silence broken only by Mrs. James' sobs. At last the blue-lined lids fluttered a little, and Nan opened her eyes as Mrs. James bent over her. Twinning her arms around her mother's neck, she drew her head down to hers. "O mother, won't you believe now that Alfred was worthy of me? He is leading me away to the garden of love"; and with a gentle sigh the arms relaxed their hold.

The City of Hope

CHAPTER IX.

THE CITY OF HOPE.

ELLEN'S first letter, written to her sister Lottie, in Redville, was characteristic. "Just a month since I resigned my position in Quinley," she wrote, "and I am ready to declare that Chicago is home; and hereafter I am Miss Ellen Ashe, of Chicago."

The letter was accompanied with a ludicrous sketch of herself, catalogued, "Miss Ellen Ashe as she prepares for a walk on the Lake-Shore Drive."

Ellen passed the first night in her new home in an apartment house on State Street. When she walked for the first time in several years along the shore of dancing blue Lake Michigan, she looked about her with new eyes. She was opposed bitterly in this venture into the great world by her cousin and sister. Mr. Kiel had died quite suddenly a week before she said farewell to her friends in Quinley, and, nearly prostrated with her own grief in parting with her cousin in her trouble, she faced the new life, as has been said, with new eyes.

Ellen Ashe

Depositing her entire little worldly sum in a convenient bank, she was ready to await developments. She was preparing for literary work, but of what particular kind she was not able yet to determine. Tingling with life and hope, she enjoyed as keenly the clang and rush of the street-cars as the graceful trees that nodded a welcome to her as she entered Lincoln Park. The very stones in the lake-front wall seemed to greet her with the spirit of this great, warm, pulsing heart of the West, which Ellen immediately christened the City of Hope.

Very balmy was the breeze that blew in from the lake, and carried away with it some of the little smarting pain of recent wounds. She returned to her apartment after a visit to the Zoo in Lincoln Park, and a little chat with the keeper, who informed her that if she liked, some day, he would allow her to enter one of the lion cages with him, so she could say, he added with a good-natured smile at her, that she had been where plenty of people didn't go. This unexpected but somewhat alarming hospitality was received by Ellen with a hasty regret that she would probably not be able to often visit the Zoo.

She climbed to the third floor of the apartment building, and entered her room, which

The City of Hope

she shared with a friend of her friend's. Miss Dearborn was older than Ellen, but the girls were entirely happy in their close association. The room was large and well ventilated, but the halls through which she must daily pass were dark and depressing. But Ellen found a solace in even these, for the windows overlooked the court where street musicians came and sang for pennies that were thrown to them by the occupants of the apartments.

The man who occupied the room next to Ellen's was a Spaniard who sang. Frequently beginning his practice at six in the morning, he occasionally sang until eleven at night. He sang the songs of the newsboys on the streets, and he sang selections from the most difficult operas; so, it may be repeated, he sang all songs at all times.

Ellen rather enjoyed the cheery music during the first few days after her arrival, and then she passed through the various stages of annoyance, amusement, and finally indifference. In time she gave the singing of Senor Tartosa no more of her attention than she vouchsafed to the clanging of the electric cars a block away.

Doctor Lonsdale, the young English-Canadian whose room was the one across the hall from the Spanish singer, was a type of the

Ellen Ashe

wholesome, boyish manhood as yet unspoiled by the city. The young Englishman was an appreciative receiver of the little invitations to lunch which the girls extended more and more frequently, as evening after evening found him in his room.

Ellen Ashe was far from being a Bohemian. She was as far incapable of adopting the fascinating but loose laws which these generous sons of freedom obey as she was incapable of breathing the atmosphere of a home where the ordinary conventionalities were of supreme importance; and yet she herself was quick to notice and resent any purposed departure from the few necessary laws of behavior that the well-bred man or woman, everywhere, finds it necessary to conform to. So, though Ellen did not altogether approve of these little lunches, she saw no way in which exception could be taken to them, after all; and her bearing toward this young Englishman was a perfect mixture of the trained woman of the world, and the broader interest of one kindly thinking traveler in another whom he meets on the one great highway.

And so the first few months passed, and brought some new power to Ellen's mind and character every day; for Chicago favors rapid mental development.

CHAPTER X.

AMONG THE STORES.

IT must be recorded that there was one trait in the character of Ellen Ashe that had been a source of infinite amusement to her friends, and had filled her relatives with grave alarm, and that was her disregard of the value of money. She refused to entertain it as a vital factor in her ideal of a successful life. She remembered the words of a great man she had talked with once. "Money," said he, "is an indication of fairness existing between you and me. It has no other purpose in our lives"; and there was truth in this to her.

The Christmas holidays were not far off, and Ellen, with a friend from Quinley, who was spending a week with her, started early one Monday morning to make a shopping tour of the city. Monday was "bargain day"; and though Miss Ashe was apt to forget what day it was, if a decidedly attractive garment caught her fancy, she agreed to allow Mrs. Scott the opportunity to buy at reduced prices.

As they walked slowly through the great stores, the crowds became greater with every

Ellen Ashe

minute. In the basement of one "city under roof" Ellen became interested in the conversation of the clerk who had sold her the goods with the girl who sat in her little cage, above the counter, and wrapped the articles as she looked over bills that were handed in to her for inspection. She was responsible for all errors at the close of the day's accounts, and Ellen noticed that most of these "inspectors" were girls of more than average dexterity and ability, as compared with the clerks in the store.

"I am sure that I laid the ten dollars right here by the goods," said the clerk, emphatically, but there was a look of terror growing in her white face.

The inspector for this department was a young Jewess.

"And I am sure that you did not. I found no bill when I wrapped the goods." There was an ugly suspicion in her eyes.

The clerk began to assert again, when an usher appeared on the scene. "What is wrong?" he asked in low tones. "This confusion must cease," and, turning on his heel, he left the department.

Ellen was convinced that he would not fail to inquire into the matter; but this great store was managed on the principle of absolute

Among the Stores

courtesy being extended to its visitors and patrons at all times, at whatever cost to the store itself.

She left the department almost regretfully when her change was given to her by the trembling hand of the clerk. Ellen pictured the girl, alone in her dreary, high little room, perhaps, after the day's toil, wondering where the money would come from to meet this unexpected call for it.

She was recalled to her own world by Mrs. Scott, who was selecting ribbon and comparing it with the design displayed on the main floor; exactly the same in quality, too. This was a little secret that Ellen had learned, but truth compels the statement that she seldom remembered it at the proper time: that in the basement rooms of a great city store the same quality of goods may be purchased at considerably less than the price asked on the upper floors. They crossed to the Annex and departed for a visit to the Boston Store.

The pleasure the two women derived from their afternoon's shopping was considerably lessened by their being unwilling witnesses to a fatal accident. A little cash girl, while running with her change, fell, and so great was the crowd that a woman, carried along in the human wave, struck her shoe against the

Ellen Ashe

child's forehead so violently that instant death resulted. Ellen proposed an immediate departure for home, and Mrs. Scott gladly followed her to the car.

An amusing little incident occurred. At one of the corners a Swedish woman entered the car with three large baskets and one small paper bag in her arms. When she had traveled a few blocks she started up suddenly from her seat, the baskets jangling to the floor, for they held tin-ware and dishes, and the bursting sack rolling apples in every direction. With a wild, horrified look out of the window she waved a pan that she had clutched in the fall of tin and shouted to the convulsed conductor: "Stop it! Stop it! I 'm mit de up car."

Most of the passengers were shaken with laughter, and, Ellen, flashing a glance of sympathy at the conductor, who did not seem able to control his merriment, helped the woman to pick up her scattered kitchen necessities. As the bewildered foreigner had fairly reached the door, a sudden jerking of the car caused her to grasp at the arm of a woman who sat next to Ellen. She drew angrily away. "Such scenes could be prevented," she said to Ellen, who looked at her in amused wonder.

Among the Stores

Miss Dearborn was awaiting them, and a delicious dinner was steaming on the pretty little table when they arrived at their apartment.

Ellen begged of them permission to read her letter, and as she read her face flushed deeply. Handing the note to Mrs. Scott, she said briefly: "Even in a great, busy city like Chicago the feeling of helpfulness is very strong. I ordered a few flowers sent to the county hospital—my school children in Quinley are responsible for them, for I shall never forget how *their* little message of affection brightened one of my 'gray' days—and asked the hospital authorities to send me the name of a patient in the children's ward. This letter is from the florist's clerk, and I shall answer it at once."

Mrs. Scott read the letter with spirit:

"DEAR MADAM: I took the liberty of reading the letter you inclosed, as you said you knew no one in the hospital. And it was such a lovely little note that I wanted to help, too; so I added a box of roses and a few tiny potted plants. At any time in the future you may have our best values."

The business card of a State Street florist was inclosed, with "Fred Montgomery, clerk," written across it.

Ellen Ashe

Mrs. Scott sang very pleasingly, and as Doctor Lonsdale was fond of music, she was prevailed upon to sing for him, after the little dinner was over, some of the old songs that will never lose their charm.

Aunt Ellen's Christmas Letter

CHAPTER XI.

AUNT ELLEN'S CHRISTMAS LETTER TO MILDRED.

ONCE upon a time I knew a little girl who owned a pretty red dress. This dress was red and white, and when you looked at her you thought there couldn't be anything that could make her look prettier or sweeter. But there was; and once Santa Claus had a thought. He wrote secretly to his ambassador to Quinley and said to him, "I wish you would find out how a certain little girl on Clifton Avenue is looking." The ambassador reported that she was a very good and pretty child, but that she could be made better and prettier, as all little girls may be.

Santa Claus began to think. He said, "I shall talk with Prince Marshall Field about it."

Prince Marshall Field called all of his people together, and said to them, "Disperse, you quick ones, and search through all my kingdom for the prettiest and brightest new dress for the little Quinley heiress." You'll have to wait until the end of the story to know what that means—to be an heiress.

Ellen Ashe

Now, whether they were rewarded in their search remains for the little heiress herself to say; but Santa Claus, although he loves to see you happy, has other little girls to make happy, too. So he thought about you in this way: "I would love to see all of my little people as happy as Mildred Kiel is, and I believe that if I ask her, she will do this for me, because I have already given her much. There is a pale little girl over on the West Side of Chicago, the kingdom of Prince Marshall Field, who has been very, very sick, and she is just now growing strong enough to sit by her window and watch the other children on the street playing. Her window is not like Mildred Kiel's, though, and I shall have to tell Mildred about it, so that she will understand how this little girl lives.

"Her house is on a narrow, crooked, dirty street, and the other houses press so closely against hers that if Moxy—that 's the little girl's name—should reach her hands out of the window, she and her little neighbor could make a chair with their hands, just like the one Mildred likes to have her mamma and Aunt Ellen carry her about in. Just think how close they must live! Then it 's always smoky, and the air doesn't smell like the air in Mildred's yard does, when the wind blows the

Aunt Ellen's Christmas Letter

rose-bushes away from each other. Moxy is a happy little girl, though. She is pretty, too, and her mamma told me that she dropped down flowers that people sent her to the other children in the alley, because, really and truly, this little girl lives in an alley."

Santa Claus had to stop here and answer a telephone message. A boy complained that his knife had only two blades, and Willie's across the street had four, and he wanted one with four blades. What do you think Santa Claus answered? Why, nothing at all. He went right on planning for you and other little boys and girls who are grateful for what he gives them. He loves to heap his gifts on children who are thankful for little gifts.

Moxy used to cry, her mother told Santa Claus, every day, not because she was angry, but because the pain in her back was so sharp, and for a long time the doctor couldn't help her.

People went to see her, not because they could cure her, but they could leave things to make her forget her back while it was curing. But now she is getting well; and can't you just shut your eyes tight and fairly see her on Christmas morning when—but I forgot! I haven't told you what it was that Santa Claus asked you to do. Just this—send

Ellen Ashe

Moxy your old red dress, and let her keep it for hers. See if we can't pretend, as you say, that we 're there when she opens her eyes.

Her room is not like yours, and it isn't all hers, for there are six sisters who sleep in it too. They have narrow little—well, you couldn't call them beds, and it 's cold, oh, so cold, for there 's air coming in from all sides, and there isn't any stove to warm it.

Moxy doesn't jump up like you do, and dance all over the room. She couldn't if she tried, because her back is weak yet and there isn't room for her to dance. But when she finds your dress—oh! then she *can* dance, after all. She forgets all about her back, and her sleepy little sisters, and dances and skips, and she doesn't seem to know that she is upsetting the other little girls over against the wall.

Do you ever remember looking at the moon, when it shines in your window at night and draws pretty figures on the carpet? Well, Moxy's face looked just like that—round and shining; and the moon, you know, lights up everything in the room and makes the chairs and the walls look white and shining, too; and Moxy's face, too, was like that. Everybody's face in the house, like the room brightens in the moonlight, reflected the brightness and pretty smiles of Moxy.

Aunt Ellen's Christmas Letter

Dear little Mildred Kiel, my Mildred, you can make this little pretending into a doing it actually. Isn't it nice to pretend that we are fairies, and can go about waving our wands and changing people's faces into what we please to make them? And we can be fairies, you and I, and our kingdom shall be Chicago.

Now, little cousin, do you know what it means to be an heiress?

New Friends

CHAPTER XII.

NEW FRIENDS.

AT the end of the fifth month in her new home, Ellen was a happy, contented, and busy student, not only of the books that were becoming more and more precious to her, but of the life of the most interesting city in the world to the student of human nature in all its phases.

Chicago is Paris and London and New York comfortably dropped between the great lake that King Edward's tenants run across when they wish to borrow half a dozen steam engines and lake boats, to say nothing of a few million pounds of beef and pork occasionally, and the waving prairie that furnishes the future greatest American city with a roomy backyard to grow in.

Dear Chicago, with your busy, helpful hand ever ready to lead the sorrowful, the despairing, the cast aside of every nation up the stairs of reviving interest into the pilot-house of actual vision of the new sea of possibility! May the abuses of newly-awakened power drop away from your glorious heart of universality!

Ellen Ashe

But we must return to Ellen. She had written a little story, and, after a week's polishing and rewriting it, carried it to the office of a great newspaper. The young man who met her responded to her request to see the editor that he was quite busy. Could he be of assistance to her? Ellen thanked him, but said that she must see the editor.

The young man grew impatient. "Editor Clarke sees few people. You see, it would be impossible. But if I," he began.

Ellen interrupted him coldly. "Yes, I understand; but this is different, and I must see him. I will wait," and she sat down calmly on the visitors' bench and wrote rapidly on a card.

The secretary retired. In a few minutes he returned, and there was a new respect and a great deal of curiosity in his manner as he said, "Editor Clarke will see you, but just now he is busy."

Ellen waited, while the hands of the office clock pointed to nine, half past, ten, and were just swinging to another quarter of an hour mark when the secretary appeared and carried Ellen's card into the private office of the editor of the *Overland*. A minute later she was presented to the great man of whom she had read and heard so much. He was sitting at

New Friends

his desk, but he rose as Ellen entered the office, and, after a slight bow, waited for her to speak.

Ellen met his eye fearlessly during her brief recital of her business with him. The famous editor listened, but as she talked he studied her closely, and not a movement escaped his eagle eye as he sat, his powerful shoulders braced against his revolving chair. Looking thoughtfully at a baby's picture resting against the books on his desk, he said, "So you have decided that you will become a journalist?"

Ellen answered him slowly. "No, I think not. I am sure that I should fail in journalism as a profession; but I hope to become a short story writer," she added, watching his face as he gave an order to some one who had called to him over the telephone. He concluded his conversation with one of his managers, and then turned again to Ellen. "Let me tell you a little story," he began, looking down on the tiny figures that swarmed in the street. Toy street cars crawled around corners where infant newsboys cried the morning press.

As he talked his eyes never left the face of the young woman, who felt that had she made the slightest move that had indicated a bold or

Ellen Ashe

adventurous character he had dismissed her without a minute's warning. But Ellen was just her true, natural self, and very much in earnest in this first step toward success, she hoped, in her chosen work.

The story went on, and Ellen could find no connection in it with her business at the office; but finally, with a quick application to her unusual entrance into his presence, the great man rose and held out his hand, in half-amused but very respectful manner.

"Now I will read your story," he said, and Ellen's heart beat high with hope. At least, she had seen him, talked with him, and he was going to read her story.

He read it through, and when he had finished he laid the sheets down on his desk and sat looking at them. "Who is your favorite poet?" he asked, abruptly turning to her.

"Wordsworth," she answered promptly, becoming a little anxious over the result of the reading.

"And your author?" he continued, pushing the papers away and leaning back in his chair again.

"Emerson," and Ellen's face brightened, as it always did when she referred to the great thinker.

"Good! No better ones could be selected; and

New Friends

now, as to this little story; you may not care to hear what I am going to say, but you will thank me some day for it," and Editor Clarke looked at her in the way of a man who has a disagreeable duty to perform, but who *will* perform it at a cost to his time.

Ellen said, so genuinely that he could not doubt that a very earnest young woman was speaking, "The criticism of a great man, though unfavorable to present success, is a hope of the future."

The editor looked pleased, though he ignored the personal compliment in her remark and went on: "The literary hill is an acknowledged hard one to climb, though few know how hard. Only those who have climbed can tell of the many, many backward slips, or the long periods of standing, between the little upward steps. I am not speaking now of journalism. Given the necessary talent, the journalist can be made. The writer is born and made. And now, Miss Ashe," he continued, more rapidly, "my advice to you is, don't write any more short stories of fiction, at least for the present. Go home and read, read, read; but don't read fiction. Read literature, and only the best literature. Study the style of all, but don't imitate; and don't forget that the simplicity in phrasing and the spontaneity of expression

Ellen Ashe

that so charm, and appear to the casual reader natural, are the result of long hours of study and the closest and most taxing study the mind can be brought to; for the trained writer values his words above price, and weighs them in gold."

He paused a moment and looked at Ellen, and there was a softened look in his keen eyes. "I believe that you will become a writer of the last class I named a moment ago; but it means the hardest work for you."

Ellen's little movement of surprise and hope thanked him better than if she had spoken in words, and he continued: "I will accept this story and pay you for it."

The little gesture of repulsion at his mention of the financial success in her venture did not escape the man who needed but a minute's conversation with a young woman to know her ideals of life. He glanced at his watch. "Although it is full of weaknesses in similes and style, there is power in it. I am going to write you a letter of introduction to a well-known and greatly-revered American writer who just now is visiting in Chicago. She has lived to see her influence in thousands of homes, and as long as her pen is active the country is made better by her stories."

When Ellen left the office, her few words of

New Friends

gratitude were so unmistakably genuine that the great editor accepted them in a like spirit. She walked home, for it would have been impossible to have breathed the air of the car. All of Chicago seemed crowded to this young aspirant for literary honors, wearing her first bay wreath. It was a very small one, to be sure, but Ellen had learned that the gates that open into the great fields of usefulness are so small that many people pass them by, not even seeing them. Others, thinking that the new ground is so little broader than the one in which they work, do not care to leave their own little ground of surety for the new one of greater uncertainty. But there are those who see, and open, and even break the bars that would keep out the earnest seeker of richer rewards of his toil; and these are the world's most useful men and women.

Ellen had been directed to call at the home of one of the less widely known merchants of the city, a distance of twelve miles across the river, and present her letter to the famous and loved writer whom she had always admired. She was received by a servant, and invited into a small but tastefully furnished drawing-room. She explained in a few words the object of her call, and she was admitted without further questioning. The servant retired,

Ellen Ashe

and Ellen waited, wondering how this woman, who had such power to touch the hearts as well as sway the intellects of thousands, would look. She was soon given an opportunity to know, for a light step announced the entrance of Mrs. Abbot into the room. After a little introductory conversation, during which she read Editor Clarke's letter, she sat down by the window and began to talk about Editor Clarke, telling a lively little story of his journalistic days.

Ellen listened and looked, making a little mental picture of her that she meant to keep. This woman, whose pen was indeed mightier than the sword, was small and very stout. Her hair was white and brushed plainly away from her face. Her eyes were gray, and if she was thoroughly interested in her subject, deepened to black. She had large but shapely hands and a sunshiny smile that had made her famous as a hospital nurse before she became famous as a writer.

There was no mention of her books until Ellen, finding it growing a little late for a courteous call, told Mrs. Abbot how much she had enjoyed her last serial story.

The author laughed. "You will not mind my laughing? But, do you know, that story is a never-ending amusement to me. Shall I tell you why?" and Ellen wondered if this was

New Friends

the woman who could write so realistically of the tragedies of New York's lower life and its sufferings.

"A very young and ambitious reporter, rather too apt to take his mission seriously, called to see me soon after the publication of that serial in book form. I was very busy on that day, as I was doing my best to finish a dress I was sewing on for my sister; and perhaps if he had called at a later hour it would not have so interfered with my work. I usually work in my kitchen or the other rooms until nine or ten, and then I am ready for my writing. He insisted on seeing me, and I finally consented to allow him a very short fifteen minutes. I shall never forget the shocked, pained, and really horrified expression in his face when I answered the last of the twenty-two questions he proposed. He inquired at just what hour of the day or night my mental powers were strongest; and did I ever find the atmosphere of my thoughts clouded by unpleasant sights or sounds? If I had been less busy, I would have suggested that probably he could judge of the effect by watching for the result of his very exaggerated manner. But I answered him truthfully that my greatest thoughts and my romances usually crystallized while I was washing the breakfast dishes. The

Ellen Ashe

poor boy escaped at once, and I was half sorry that I had said it, he looked so disappointed," and Mrs. Abbot laughed long and heartily at the recollection of the discomfited youth.

Ellen joined her, enjoying every minute in the society of this natural, unspoiled woman whose fame was so great.

"Then there are the school-girl writers," continued the author. "One came to see me once, and asked if I would write the closing chapters of 'Lady Ivy Irene's Revenge.' She didn't want it known, of course; but she had mixed a duel and a fire so terribly that her poor heroine was present at both places simultaneously."

Ellen rose at last very regretfully.

Mrs. Abbot left the room quickly and returned carrying a huge bunch of chrysanthemums. Putting them into Ellen's hands, she said in her charming hostess manner again, "You didn't ask me for my autograph, and this is an expression of my appreciation."

When Ellen left the house, at the end of a very momentous hour in her life, she had learned more about the real life of a truly great woman than she had in the hours of study of the lives of famous men and women in her school-days.

CHAPTER XIII.

EDITOR CLARKE'S ASSISTANT.

MISS DEARBORN held out a letter to Ellen when she returned, one day, from an afternoon walk. She was not curious, but she was a little interested in this letter, for the name of one of the great newspaper firms was printed on the envelope. Ellen broke the seal. "Editor Clarke of the *Overland* asks me to call at the office to-morrow afternoon," she said, and Miss Dearborn became interested again in her household duties.

As the hand of the clock poised before the hour designated in the letter, Ellen again presented her card to the secretary to the editor of the *Overland*, and this time was at once admitted into the private editorial office. Editor Clarke was called away immediately after lunch, but would she wait, perhaps half an hour? apologized a young man whom Ellen had not seen on the day of her first visit to the office. It was quite expected that she wait, and Ellen had no intention of doing anything else.

Ellen Ashe

The young man was assistant editor of the great paper. He was very tall, and his shoulders were broad and athletic. His eyes, like his chief's, were keen and full of the fire that great thoughts kindle. His handsome mouth and chin were strong but finely molded; and a somewhat bronzed appearance of his face bore out the impression that the shoulders belonged to a man who lived out of doors, despite his profession. He wrote a page, and then, throwing down his pen, wheeled in his chair. "The strikers are not far off to-day," he remarked as shouts and the sound of rioting came faintly into the rooms.

Ellen shuddered a little. She had not followed the progress of the strike through the columns of the papers, as long ago she had decided that she could not read of such things and hope to read literature with delicacy of interpretation. Oh, to read with the ulterior purpose of solving these vital labor questions, that was another matter! But the habit of picking up a newspaper and following with interest the stories of fires, and strikes, and bloodshed she would not allow herself to cultivate.

A little conversation on strikes and their effect on commercial life was well on into a little enjoyable talk when Editor Clarke re-

Editor Clarke's Assistant

turned. His assistant left the room, and the editor requested Ellen to give the story of her visit to the author, who was his friend. She gave her impression of the character of the writer.

"You cannot be too enthusiastic in your praise of her. She is always so, although she has known many a hard struggle in her climb to fame. But, now, will you do a little work for us for a month or so in the department where we employ only young women?" he asked, in his curt business tone.

Ellen was not completely surprised, and her answer was the result of long study and discussion with herself—what course she should pursue to realize her cherished purpose, to become a writer. She had no taste for office work or newspaper writing. She desired more than anything else freedom to read and study the great books she had so sadly neglected in her school-days, even in her teaching years. So she declined the position Editor Clarke offered to her, and gave her reason

She did not know it at the time, but the editor, after she had left his office, dispatched a note to Mrs. Abbot, asking her to invite Ellen to a little dinner she was giving for a few of the literary people of Chicago. His wife was a writer of short stories for children, and he

Ellen Ashe

decided that Ellen would be helped by a meeting with her.

Some distinguished guests were entertained at the modest but artistic home of Mr. Cordon the merchant. Mrs. Abbot was his wife's cousin, and visited at their home while she was resident in the city.

Ellen thought it best, since she could not appear in an expensive dinner costume, to adopt the other extreme; so she wore a perfectly simple white India linen gown that she bought especially, however, for the occasion. She rode across the city alone in a carriage, but she had taken the precaution to select her cabman with some care on the preceding day.

The dinner was the happiest event in Ellen's life. Seated at the table were some of the great thinkers both of this country and of England; but there was such an absence of ostentation, and so much real greatness in evidence during the whole course of the evening, that Ellen realized at last what it seems to require years to teach many—that true greatness needs no protection. It is *above* the form and ceremony of conventionalism, and does not tremble within *its* shielding folds.

Editor Clark's wife was a woman of animated and sprightly manners, and yet it could

Editor Clarke's Assistant

not be said of her that she "put them on and off," for her manner, or "the expression of her personality," as some one has called behavior, was distinctive in its true worth.

Mrs. Cordon presented Editor Clarke's assistant to Ellen, and they permitted the introduction with no recognition of their earlier meeting in the office of the *Overland*. He took Ellen in to dinner, and she learned for the first time that he was a Catholic, for his quiet refusal of the meats caused a little lecture to be given by his chief on the dangers of a growing weakness in memory. "You declared, Kilbourne, that you never accepted an invitation to a Friday dinner," he said in a low tone to his young assistant, who sat next to him at the table.

Ellen was talking with Mrs. Abbot, but Mrs. Clarke had heard her husband's remark, and, throwing a look of inimitable understanding at the young journalist, she said innocently, "But that was long, long ago."

Mr. Kilbourne ate his fruit gravely, but there was an indefinable smile on his lips. When Ellen turned again toward him there was a trace of pink in her cheeks and she was gayer than she had been earlier in the evening.

From the earliest hour of their conversation Ellen and Editor Kilbourne "were in tune,

Ellen Ashe

and, underneath, they both knew it"; and it was subtly acknowledged by each that their words surfaced a strong, deep underflow of like to like.

Later in the evening she found an opportunity for a little talk with Lord Howard, the great English scientist. His wife was the daughter of a United States Senator, and was a beautiful woman, but she seemed little interested in the world of science in which her husband ruled by his thought. Lord Howard declared his intention to tour eastern India, in order to search for a new plant that was proved to prevent the dread swamp fever. "My wife will go, because she is interested in their rugs and laces," he added, looking up at her as she stood by him. He was seated with Ellen on the great oak window-seat that curved the wall.

Lady Howard replied with girlish eagerness as she turned toward them. "I do so long to see their lovely silks and jewels. Don't you love Oriental stuff?" she asked of Ellen, her wide-open, frank eyes alight with enthusiasm.

"Yes, indeed; and you may be sure that they are genuine silks if you buy them in India," Ellen answered, watching the light strike blue fire from the diamond ornament in Lady Howard's hair.

Her ladyship greeted Mrs. Abbot warmly as

Editor Clarke's Assistant

that lady passed the little group. She looked after the famous woman with reverence in her eyes. "I don't see how she can write such wonderful stories. Think what she must know!" she said to her husband after Ellen and Editor Kilbourne began a little chat as they walked away together.

"Mrs. Abbot is a wonderful woman; but, my love, she is not you," and Lord Howard's emphasis of the pronoun convinced his wife of his willing submission to the fate that had placed his coronet upon her head.

"Percy," she said, in a little burst of affection and confidence as they were driving to their hotel, "sometimes I think a great, wise man like you ought not to have married such a frivolous little thing as I; but I can't remember those long scientific things, and who discovered them," she confessed; but a very unscientific answer assured her ladyship that she was of invaluable help in her husband's scientific researches.

Ellen left just after the Howards, and Mr. Kilbourne rode with her, as the hour was very late.

An Evening Walk

CHAPTER XIV.

AN EVENING WALK.

A MONTH after Mrs. Abbot's evening at home a very small but select club was organized by that lady and Mr. Clarke, and Ellen was invited to become a member. Mrs. Abbot had decided to remain in Chicago for a year, and Ellen was now a frequent caller at her home.

The club, of course, was literary in its purpose, and Mr. Kilbourne was president. But the "club" was a pretext for bringing together fortnightly people who were vitally interested in the literary movements of the day.

Ellen was still a hard student, but she was developing her "future" as she had dreamed long ago, as a child. She received long letters from her cousin and sister, and she wrote often. She corresponded, however, regularly with Miss Aisles and Margaret Doe, who had been a friend of her childhood.

In one of her letters to Miss Aisles she wrote describing one of Mrs. Abbot's delightful evenings. "I wish you could meet Mr. Kilbourne. We enjoyed a pleasant walk along the beach

Ellen Ashe

the other evening. I believe I told you that he is a Catholic. It is growing a little interesting now to see who is to win in this long-continued but always new discussion—I won't say of religion; that 's too absurd—but of creeds. We seem to drift away from the subject, but before we know it we are discussing it again, each more in earnest and more unyielding than before."

Ellen sat before her window, one evening, in the darkening room. She liked to sit and watch the lighted carriages as they whirled along the avenue, and the street-cars as they flashed past the corner with their crowds of men and women seeking relaxation after their day's work down in the city. To-night she was thinking deeply and recalling, word by word, her last long conversation with John Kilbourne. She had proposed this question to him: "How can you, a thinking man, reconcile the confessional to your broad ideas on every other subject of thought? You teach children that the consequences of their wrong reach no further than the confessional door, when we see on every side the suffering that always follows disobedience either in the natural or in the world of man's laws. Then, too, your worship is so closely confined to words and song. Suppose, now," she had said

An Evening Walk

as they sat along the beach watching the yachts that dotted the lake, "suppose I were to give you my picture, as a reminder that I existed. Suppose that I were being beaten to death in the room adjoining the one in which my picture hung. My cries would reach you, but you would still stand before my picture, too rapt in admiration to leave off gazing. Slowly, minute by minute, my life were ebbing away, and still you stood, lost in contemplation of the image of myself; and your great, magnificent cathedral is the room, and Chicago is dying without its doors."

He had listened quietly, and there was a note of pain in his voice when he answered her. "Your argument is good; but people must worship. I am speaking now of the great mass of people, people with a purpose in life and that purpose the supporting of their families and the earning of honest bread. These people have not time to think about these questions—they can only work on day by day and see the result of an idea after it is shown in a deed. If these people are made better by being held firmly to a center, instead—we are speaking now of the deepest principles and cannot consider ourselves—of a transient or violent faith, or, worse still, a conformity without heart to a creed without meaning, who shall say that

the strength of my faith does not show greater than its weakness?"

Ellen reflected a moment. "True," she agreed to his criticism of the newer form of worship, "but if I need to remind you in words that I am a follower of Christ, my religion is worthless. I believe that in trouble or strife we are stronger because of the fact that the spirit of faith is within us. God to us is not so much a Being to fear as to serve. How? By 'acting our faith in our daily lives,' so Lowell has said.

"Mr. Kilbourne, explain to me, please, why you buy prayers," she had commanded, after he had rescued a small boy's war-boat from a dangerous shoal a foot in diameter.

"I refuse to defend that," he had replied, setting his lips firmly, and a quick color had mounted to his forehead.

"And well you may. Our God is the God of love, and love will not be bought," Ellen had replied, with a look that acknowledged his concession to truth. "He gives, always and ever. The sun, the moon, and the stars are his; and you partake of the warmth and the balm, and exult in the inspiration of these, his gifts. Are you unthankful? The glory of his messengers of love is undimmed."

Mr. Kilbourne had answered her: "Not long

An Evening Walk

ago I heard your minister, Doctor Lincoln, talk on this subject—"Tests." He was speaking to a mixed crowd, and many of the people who listened to him were laboring men. He said to them, 'Is it not a comfort, you of heavy hearts and heavier burdens, to know that God has said the gold is tried in the furnace? Stand you the test of years firmly and with faith, and you shall evermore be blessed; but faint and complain, then he has said, too, the small vessel is for the silver. Which will you be, the gold or the silver of his workmanship?' The men were fairly intelligent, and, I believe, fairly comprehended him; but he went on to say—"

But he was not permitted to finish his sentence, for the small boy had waded beyond his depth, and was with some difficulty brought back to land by Mr. Kilbourne, while Ellen had looked on in some anxiety, for a storm was brewing and the waves were tipped with foam.

In some way the great prophetic Voice had whispered to each, during the walk home, of the coming parting of the ways; and Ellen sighed deeply when she rose, at last, and prepared for an evening's reading of Ruskin.

L. & C.

A Decision and a Question

CHAPTER XV.

A DECISION AND A QUESTION.

"If once we choose belief, on all accounts
We can't be too decisive in our faith.
—*Browning.*

RELIGION was seldom discussed on the club evenings, as each was aware of the other members' deep belief.

Lord Howard believed in no personal God, or, as Ellen phrased it, "he believes in a central soul, such as Emerson believes to exist, but denies the existence of a God of prayer."

She said this to Mrs. Clarke one evening, and that lady remonstrated. "My dear Miss Ashe, Emerson's essays are full of references to God," she declared, and a little group formed about the two women.

"But not to a God of prayer," repeated Ellen. "Only a week ago I read this," and Ellen quoted, "'The simplest person who in his integrity worships God becomes God.' Emerson is my favorite author, but I shall be true to the faith of my soul, nevertheless," she replied, smiling a little at the great Englishman who had on several occasions attempted to destroy her faith. Lord Howard was a

Ellen Ashe

scientist and a nobleman, but he knew how to throw into a sentence something very close to an insult in tone.

"I don't see how you account for this American genius, then. Right principles make right living, eh, Miss Ashe?" he said, curling his lip.

"Emerson and men like you are born into the world to give to faith the strengthening element it needs. Your lives prove that even faith alone cannot make strong characters. There is a time, too, when it is cowardly to pray. It was never meant that we should lean on prayer," responded Ellen, in tones as cutting as his own; but hers were sharpened on the edge of truth.

"Then you agree, Miss Ashe, that one must be true to the faith of his soul?" asked a quiet voice as the group gradually dissolved into couples and threes. The hand which Mr. Kilbourne held out to her spoke an eloquent answer within the question; and as Ellen's hand was held for an instant in the strong grasp of the man she so highly honored, she said, looking up into the handsome, noble face, "Thomas à Kempis, a Catholic, more directly influenced my thoughts of Christ than any living or dead man or woman."

Mrs. Abbot came up to them with a little re-

A Decision and a Question

proof for failing to take an active part in a new discussion going on where another little group had formed.

"Shall we plan our boat excursion for this or next week?" she asked, and they made haste to join the others.

Mr. Kilbourne announced in a half-official manner to the club that he would leave his duties as president in other hands soon, as he was preparing for an extended business trip to Europe in the interest of his paper.

Mrs. Abbot waited until the little murmur of surprise and regret had subsided somewhat, and followed Mr. Kilbourne with the declaration of her purpose to return to New York, and her long-neglected pen. A publisher had demanded a new book, and she could not well refuse to produce it.

So the evening was prolonged into a farewell meeting of the members of the International Literary Society.

In Germany

CHAPTER XVI.

IN GERMANY.

MANY a man and woman realizes a certain kind of success as the outgrowth of ability and diligence. Then a period is placed on his life-page, and the Spirit of Truth declares: Further than this ye may not go, unless ye worship God in lowliness of spirit. As ye are humbled before God, so shall ye be exalted before men.

And now Ellen was given an opportunity to act the faith she had so bravely defended with her voice, for her lungs were seriously affected by the rough lake winds, and grave fears were beginning to disturb her peace. She found herself recalling Mr. Kilbourne's quoted words of her own Doctor Lincoln, and she resolved to be the gold. A little letter from Mildred, written in a very shaky hand, came like a bright ray into her life, several months after her conversation with the young editor. She had begged of her mother permission to write to Ellen, and her mother had held the fat little hand, though the sentences were the child's own. She wrote:

Ellen Ashe

"DEAR AUNT ELLEN: Sometimes I can't make my talking come. My pony is eating. Some time I 'll get a waist that shivers like mother's when she walks and the wind blows. I 've had my hair cut, and Susie calls me Tommy. I don't like it.

"MILDRED KIEL."

As Ellen held the letter lovingly a minute, an idea presented itself to her mind, and soon filled it to the exclusion of every other thought. Why not write a child's book, and perhaps entertain other boys and girls as she had entertained little Mildred by writing her little scraps of poems and stories? Write it she did, and it became a popular book.

A month or so after the success of her book was assured, Ellen stored her books away in Chicago, and, selecting from her little library only her Bible and some beautiful little cloudy-blue volumes of Shakespeare, she prepared for a European trip. She was accompanied on this voyage to the Europe she had for so many years longed to visit, although she was a true American, by a lifetime friend of the Ashe family, Miss Dean, a woman whom Ellen admired to such an extent that no one presumed to discuss her faults in her presence.

Ellen was not a lover of English scenery, as she preferred the wild natural beauty of her

In Germany

own country. It must not be supposed that she had not seen much of her own land before this time. She had visited along the Pacific Coast in her childhood, had been in Canada and the northeastern section, and had crossed the border into Mexico; so that she was fairly familiar with the land of her birth. They spent but a week, therefore, in London, and only a few days in Paris. Ellen was eager to breathe freely of Germany's forest-laden air.

A month after their departure from New York the two Americans were cozily settled in a little fairy house that had been rented to them by a landowner who was leaving for a tour of America. This house peeped inquisitively into a fairy forest that stretched enticingly and mysteriously away into a maze of tangled distance.

Ellen Ashe lived. Her lungs grew better and healed rapidly. After hours of physical exercise and practice in the open air she was able to expand them in breathing capacity far beyond the average limit. She was treated for her trouble by a physician whose blood was noble, but whose craving to be scientifically useful was too strong to permit of his leading the life of ease and luxury of his class. However, he never allowed it to be forgotten that he was a nobleman. He attacked Ellen's native

Ellen Ashe

country fiercely. "Oh, you Americans! You scramble and struggle up what you call the ladder of social success or social position. Bah! how it disgusts me to hear these people talking about old families and blood! They don't know what blood is," he said with scorn. "These funny Americans!" and he shook a bottle threateningly at his imaginary second cousins across the sea.

Ellen defended her countrymen with vigor. "But you are too broad in your use of the word. You are unjust to include the great middle class, and they are the true Americans," she protested, enjoying this man's refusal to be polite when his conviction forced expression of itself.

He turned on her quickly. "And you literary men and women! You, with your poor little mind, imagine that you can tell people how to think. People don't need to be told how to think. Teach them how to eat and they 'll think right." He was off now on his cherished theory of the right life, and Ellen resigned herself to listen to a lecture on health. "Oh, your writers! What nonsense they all write! Your Milton and your Dante—dreamers, all of them. I tell you, people need to eat good, fresh vegetables, well cooked, one at a meal, no mixture, plenty of fruit, drink

In Germany

no coffee, no tea, and take plenty of exercise in the air. One good square meal is all they need, too, each day. Then they are ready to think."

Ellen owed her life to this doctor, who had exercised the strictest discipline in his treatment of her case. She was allowed no breakfast, unless a few grapes or an apple constituted it, but she was sent for a long walk through the forest, or along the country roads. She ate little meat, and no pastry of any kind; and for her supper she was given two slices of toast, nicely browned, and all of the honey she cared to eat with it. The doctor had ordered a bonfire of her writing material, so that she wrote only letters, and few of those. The sharp curve in her shoulders gradually flattened into a straight, strong back, the hollow chest developed into fullness, and her springing step and bright eyes gladdened the eyes of anxious Miss Dean, who daily examined the patient to see what progress she had made. She forced Ellen to take her breathing exercises in her presence, so that she might know they were well done.

Miss Ashe was very much of a pupil during those early days in Germany, and could not quite say that her time was her own. But she was recovering her health, and she was grate-

Ellen Ashe

ful indeed to the great physician for his never-relaxed and hard rules, but the kindest that he could have invented.

The doctor greeted her one day with the announcement that the Baron Kaff would spend a month or so with his daughters in his forest villa, situated on the edge of the great wald, and across it from Ellen's abode. "The baron spends many months here," he said, folding the letter and returning it to the envelope.

One day, soon after the conversation with the doctor, Ellen took the writing-case that Miss Aisles had so daintily made for her in leather, and with three or four extra pencils slipped into it, prepared for an ideal afternoon in the forest. The doctor had granted her permission to write a little each day now, as she was so nearly ready for his dismissal. She sat on her favorite moss seat, leaning her head back against the friendly giant that dropped down green punctuation on her white paper. She breathed long and deep for several minutes. Then she fell to work, and was lifting the head of a dying soldier to put a cup of water to his lips, and the blazing sun of Africa was beating down upon her, when, raising her head suddenly, she beheld a stranger regarding her at some distance away. Ellen lowered her eyes to her paper again, and

In Germany

went on with her writing. She knew him instantly, for the doctor's wife had described the Baron Kaff only a few days before. As he passed Ellen on his way through the forest, he lifted his cap with the courtesy so marked in the true German. Ellen slightly inclined her head and finished her story, writing rapidly, as the shadows were beginning to steal away the little ribbons of light that fluttered down through the trees and fell at her feet.

CHAPTER XVII.

BARON KAFF.

A FURIOUS storm swept over the great forest, and hundreds of trees were torn from the proud position that had been theirs for a century and thrown in confused cross-barriers to the march of the traveler who followed the winding path in its unexpected bends and plunges into darkness and light. The Baron Kaff uttered an exclamation of regret at the ruin of the grand old guardians of Germany's romance.

"Papa, what a pity! And there is my own darling, Sir Walter Scott, down," and a child of ten broke away from her father's hand and filled her arms with branches of velvety leaves. "But, papa, I 'm sure that some people will be glad, and that 's the peasants," she said, looking up into his face with a dazzling child-smile.

"Do they allow the peasants these trees?" asked the elder girl, who was five years her sister's senior.

"I believe they do," replied her father, removing an immense branch from the path.

Ellen Ashe

The little party made their way slowly through the forest, and when they arrived at Doctor Von Burg's door they had been an hour longer than it usually required to cross the wald.

Ellen was calling at the house when the baron and his daughters arrived at the little cottage. Doctor Von Burg's real home was in a little principality several duchies removed from his cottage at Waldmar. Ellen had seen the picture of his ancestral castle and its famous picture gallery.

An interval of silence that grew into a most embarrassing minute to Ellen followed the entrance of the baron and his daughters into the little reception-room. Frau Von Burg was painfully confused, and the doctor was in the village.

Ellen waited for a presentation of some sort to take place, and, none coming, she prepared to leave the room, but was prevented by the baron, who stepped aside so that he stood slightly barring her passage through the doorway. "I am honored at meeting Miss Ashe?" he inquired in so reverent a tone and with so courtly a bending of his head that Ellen could not refuse to acknowledge his address.

"Baron Kaff, I am sure," she replied, haughtily, a dangerous light in her eyes.

Baron Kaff

The baron bowed again. "And now may I present to you Fraulein Alexandra?" and a tiny flickering of her eyelids and a scarcely-perceptible lifting of her gaze to Ellen's face, left her in no doubt that the younger girl, at least, was not the daughter named.

"Fraulein Elizabeth may perhaps remain quiet long enough to be acknowledged as my daughter," continued the baron as the little girl came up to him and half-shyly held out her hand to Ellen. With a quick rush of emotion Ellen took it in hers, and the child, looking frankly up into her face, said, "Miss Ashe, you write, don't you? The doctor told me about you. Papa laughs at me, but I write stories, too," she explained, throwing a daring smile at him over her shoulder.

Ellen's reserve was not proof against this unexpected attack, and she remained a while talking with the baron and his daughter Elizabeth. Fraulein Alexandra had retired into another room with a book, and Ellen did not see her again before she left the cottage.

She was annoyed at an unexpected meeting with Frau Von Burg as she was taking her early walk among the trees, a few days after the remarkable call. Ellen could not understand the woman's very unusual manner on the day of her last visit to her home, for she

Ellen Ashe

was of noble blood, too, and had never displayed the slightest ignorance of social custom before that time.

She greeted Ellen eagerly. "I came to see you, Miss Ashe. Will you not come to our little evening, so friendly?" she asked, with a pleading look in her kind eyes.

Ellen relented a little. Frau Von Burg had been very kind and helpful during her first illness, when they found it necessary to summon medical aid.

"Do you come. We are not asking, only in respect to the baron, who is a neighbor," she begged so earnestly that Ellen left her with the promise given to be a guest at the cottage again.

During the evening "in respect to him," Baron Kaff said to Ellen, "Miss Ashe, I am going to ask of you a favor of your most valuable time. My daughter Elizabeth has developed an interest in story-writing that amounts to a mania. If I may ask of you permission to let her read one of her stories to you, she will be the happiest little girl in all Germany," he laughed, but waited for Ellen's reply.

She granted it readily, for she was beginning to love the child. Always fond of studying the various types of childhood, she found

Baron Kaff

this little German lady of high degree a very interesting study indeed. As for the elder daughter, Ellen and she were so far removed in temperament that it was hard to find even a casual ground of understanding upon which they could meet. Fraulein Alexandra's was one of the natures that know only the bright, snowy heights, where no storm of strong or deep feeling ever disturbs the equa-calm of perfect approval of life and its advantages.

A week later Ellen received the little poet in her green "drawing-room," and the real and the play author wandered through the great cool halls of this mansion of nature and grew to be very good friends as the afternoon light faded in the west. The great teacher, Art, had stood above her children and joined the hands of her older and her younger pupil; for Art knows no age.

Kerzdorf

CHAPTER XVIII.

KERZDORF.

"The love of all
Is but a small thing to the love of one."
—*Elizabeth Barrett Browning,*
in "*Aurora Leigh*."

"BARON KAFF, you cannot know the real nature of the woman you have so honored by asking her to become your wife. Just three months ago you met—I called at Dr. Von Burg's," corrected Ellen, quickly, and then paused in some confusion, for the baron's smile was a little puzzling.

They were in Kerzdorf, along the Rhine, and the golden moonlight lay on the dark blue waters of the artists' theme. So many poets have sung of it, and so many painters have pictured it, that we will not attempt to enrich the already full praise of the dream-river. Dr. Von Burg and his wife were entertaining Ellen and Miss Dean at their own home, in the principality of Kerzdorf. Baron Kaff was at the castle on this evening, the first of the ten days Ellen was to be a guest of Frau Von Burg. They were walking in the garden, close by the old wall that sloped down to the rippling

Ellen Ashe

little waves, plashing against it so musically. Rose vines trailed their graceful lengths along the water's surface and climbed to throw velvet fire among the rich green branches of a tree that bent to greet them.

Ellen touched the dull gold heart of one crimson blossom with a gentle little shake of the vine. The petals fell in a shower of flame, leaving the golden center. "So it is, and so it shall be! The petals fade and drop away, but the heart is firm—and pure," she said, softly, turning to the baron, who was watching her as he stood close to the water's edge, where the wall dipped into a tiny valley.

"And I am waiting," he murmured, walking slowly toward her as she stood a little above him on the slope.

Oh, you moon, you roses, you Rhine of wondrous beauty! And yonder, high against the blackened blue of the night sky rises the ancient tower of countless generations, flashing and glittering in the moonlight. It is you, silent voices of destiny that shall say, Ellen Ashe or—Baroness Kaff?

* * * * *

In the famous gallery in the Castle Inglostadt hung a picture before which Ellen paused, first in surprise, then in complete bewilderment. The baron, Dr. Von Burg,—the

Kerzdorf

Count Rosheim,—and the countess, with Ellen and Miss Dean who followed with the baron's daughters, were inspecting the gallery on the afternoon before Ellen's departure from Kerzdorf.

The picture was a portrait of the baron, and it occupied a central position; but it was the picture of a man in the robes of state, for on his head rested a circlet of jewels. Ellen stood before it with cheeks a little less white than the marble against which she placed her hand for support.

The Count Von Rosheim, not the doctor she had known so long as her stern teacher of the laws of health, with a quick, reverent movement dropped on his knee a moment before the Baron Kaff, who, with firmly-set lips but smiling eyes was looking at Ellen. "Your Highness, may I present Miss Ashe?" asked the count, after an interval of silence so intense that the rustle of the trees, far below, came distinctly into the room.

"You may," replied the Baron, quietly, and Count Rosheim, bowing low first before the Baron, then to Ellen, said in even, distinct tones, "His Royal Highness, the Prince of Kerzdorf, has requested that I present Miss Ashe to him."

Ellen was an American, and American

Ellen Ashe

women are good actresses; and Ellen was a writer who had long lived the parts she forced her heroines to play. And Ellen, too, was a woman who rose above convention; so with a very graceful bending of her American head she was presented to the ruler of Kerzdorf.

As she stood alone on the balcony an hour later the man whose promised wife she was appeared at her side. The gallery was deserted, for the prince had asked that he be allowed an hour's conversation with Miss Ashe before she departed from the ancient castle, Inglostadt.

"Your Royal Highness will permit my seeking the others?" she asked, attempting to pass the door; but again he barred the way to escape as on the afternoon of mystery, now so clear to her. She felt only pity for the patriotic German woman who would not present her sovereign to a traveler in his cousin's little kingdom.

"Not unless you will not stay," he replied, taking her hand. Ellen drew it from his touch as though it had burned her.

"You dare," she began, with blazing eyes. Then, remembering where she was, she turned away, and, resting one hand upon the railing, looked down into the tree tops that tapped against the wall below her feet.

Kerzdorf

"Will you listen to me for a little hour?" asked the man whose voice had a wonderful power to arouse the lights in her eyes. And now they flashed at him.

"Your Highness, I am a traveler, a guest in your realm. I cannot refuse to hear you," and Ellen Ashe, the American, had spoken.

"The promise to become my wife I shall hold you to," he said in a low, cool voice, retaining the hand she tried to free. He was looking at the rich heart of a ruby that had been slipped on the third finger soon after the moonlight night among the roses. Ellen discovered too late that she had not yet removed it. Her face crimsoned with mingled anger against herself and the man from whose merciless power she seemed strangely unable to free herself.

"But you have granted me permission to speak," he continued, releasing her hand at last. "Ellen—Ashe," he began slowly, looking into the brown eyes that wavered a little beneath his gaze, "I asked you to become my wife because I love you. You promised to marry the Baron Kaff; and is it so that you did not promise to marry—the man?" he asked, his tone shading into an emphasis.

Ellen's head was thrown back with one of the quick, haughty movements that were so

Ellen Ashe

new to her. "But you know that, had I been aware of the fact that you were cousin to a king, I would not have given that promise?" she asked, quietly slipping the ring from her finger.

The Prince of Kerzdorf lifted his brows a little. His eyes held just a hint of the ruler as he said, a degree removed from his former manner, "You know my cousin, then? He is an important consideration, to be sure, in his own country, but I suppose, here in Kerzdorf"—and with a half-apologetic shrug the prince included the principality in a little gesture of indifference.

"I ask your Highness to forgive the insult. It is hard for me to think of you as a ruler," and Ellen's manner was both confused and winning.

"Then don't try, now; but think of me as you please," he added, quickly, as Ellen's haughtiness returned at his words, "only give me a reason for your undeserved rejection of me," he concluded.

The royal head needed no crown, Ellen thought, as he stood waiting for her reply. "Your Highness asks that of me, an American?" she questioned, in tones of unmistakable surprise. "Your mother is the sister of a king, and the royal families do not receive

Kerzdorf

Americans as wives." Her eyes were becoming danger signals again.

"Usually; but my family is represented by its head," the prince responded quietly.

"The laws of your country," began Ellen, but he interrupted her for the first time.

"The laws governing the court etiquette of a tiny kingdom like Kerzdorf are far less strict than those of the great kingdoms you are familiar with. There are no laws against such a marriage, no family objections," and he smiled, "and the little principality whose crown has by chance of fate fallen upon my head will be honored in its American princess, if you become my wife."

And now there is no moon, no tower, no Rhine to say, Ellen Ashe, or the Princess of Kerzdorf?

AUG 7 1905.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00019362218